3 1761 06583557 1

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/charlesbardlaugh01braduoft

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

HX.B
B811
Yb

CHARLES BRADLAUGH

A RECORD OF HIS LIFE AND WORK BY HIS DAUGHTER HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE, POLITICS AND TEACHINGS, BY JOHN M. ROBERTSON

VOL. I

64149
11/4/05.

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE. 1902

DA
565
B7B65
1902
v.1

FIFTH EDITION.

PREFACE.

"I WISH you would tell me things, and let me write the story of your life," I said in chatting to my father one evening about six weeks before his death. "Perhaps I will, some day," he answered. "I believe I could do it better than any one else," I went on, with jesting vanity. "I believe you could," he rejoined, smiling. But to write the story of Mr Bradlaugh's life with Mr Bradlaugh at hand to give information is one thing: to write it after his death is quite another. The task has been exceptionally difficult, inasmuch as my father made a point of destroying his correspondence; consequently I have very few letters to help me.

This book comes to the public as a record of the life and work of a much misrepresented and much maligned man, a record which I have spared no effort to make absolutely accurate. Beyond this it makes no claim.

For the story of the public life of Mr Bradlaugh from 1880 to 1891, and for an exposition of his teachings and opinions, I am fortunate in having the assistance of Mr J. M. Robertson. We both feel that the book throughout goes more into detail and is more controversial than is usual or generally desirable with biographies. It has, however, been necessary to enter into details, because the most trivial acts of Mr Bradlaugh's life have been misrepresented, and for these misrepresentations, not for his acts, he has been condemned. Controversy we have desired to avoid, but it has not been altogether possible. In dealing with strictures on Mr Bradlaugh's conduct or opinions, it is not sufficient to say that they are without

justification; one must show how and where the error lies, and where possible, the source of error. Hence the defence to an attack, to our regret, often unavoidably assumes a controversial aspect.

A drawback resulting from the division of labour in the composition of the book is that there are a certain number of repetitions. We trust, however, that readers will agree with us in thinking that the gain of showing certain details in different relations outweighs the fault of a few re-iterations.

In quoting Mr Bradlaugh's words from the *National Reformer*, I have for the sake of greater clearness and directness altered the editorial plural to the first person singular.

I desire to express here my great indebtedness to Mrs Mary Reed for her help, more especially in searching old newspaper files with me at the British Museum.

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

1894.

CONTENTS.

Part 1.

BY HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Vol. I.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD 1

Origin of the Bradlaugh family—James Bradlaugh—Charles Bradlaugh, senr.—His marriage—Birth of Charles Bradlaugh—Needy circumstances of the family—Character and tastes of his father—Character of his mother—Schooling—Handwriting—Amusements—Early lessons in politics.

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD 7

Charles Bradlaugh as office-boy—Wharf clerk and cashier—Politics at Bonner's Fields—Sunday School—The Rev. J. G. Packer—Suspended from duties as Sunday School teacher—Bonner's Fields on Sunday—Mrs Sharples Carlile—The Warner Street Temperance Hall—A teetotaller—Mr Packer's methods—An angry father—The ultimatum—Leaving home—Mr Packer's responsibility.

CHAPTER III.

YOUTH 17

Alone in the world—B. B. Jones—A youthful "coal merchant"—The baker's wife—Selling braces—Mrs Carlile offers a home—"A little Hebrew and an imperfect smattering of other tongues"—Hypatia Carlile—Brother and sister—Youthful oratory—The *British Banner*—Austin Holyoake—George Jacob Holyoake—The first pamphlet—A "season's campaign."

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

ARMY LIFE 25

Poverty, hunger, and debt—Enlisting for the East India service —Enrolled in the 50th Foot—Transferred to the 7th Dragoon Guards—Family reconciliation—The father's changed character —Troubles at sea—Temperance advocacy under difficulties— "Leaves"—At Rathmines Church—A right-of-way—A new officer—Donnybrook Fair—An Irish tragedy.

CHAPTER V.

ARMY LIFE CONCLUDED 35

The father's death—Letters home—Death of Miss Elizabeth Trimby—Mother and Daughter—Purchasing his discharge— Advantages derived from Army life—James Thomson.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE 41

Changes at home—A soldier in search of work—With Mr Rogers, of 70 Fenchurch Street—Anonymous busybodies again— "Iconoclast"—The Hooper family—Old letters—Poetry—Calumnies refuted—Common-sense justice—First recorded lawsuit— Marriage—My sister's birth—My mother.

CHAPTER VII.

HYDE PARK MEETINGS, 1855 52

The new Sunday Bill—In Hyde Park—"Go to Church"— Hyde Park again—The Bill abandoned—The Royal Commission —Mr Bradlaugh's evidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORSINI ATTEMPT 62

Lecturing and writing—"The Bible: what it is"—Arrest of Edward Truelove—Felice Orsini—Simon Bernard—Thomas Allsop—"Thorough"—Recollections of W. E. Adams.

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY LECTURES AND DEBATES 72

Provincial lectures—First visit to Northampton—President of the London Secular Society—Robert Owen's last paper—*The Investigator*—Political meetings—Hyde Park—Guildhall— Debates: Thomas Cooper—Rev. Brewin Grant—Dr Mensor— Rev. T. D. Matthias—Mr Court—John Smart.

CHAPTER X.

PAGE
HARD TIMES 90

The Manchester poisoning case—Mr Harvey—Rheumatic fever—Elysium Villa—My brother's birth—Kate—Railway journeys—A lecturer's profits—An editor's profits.

CHAPTER XI.

A CLERICAL LIBELLER 99

An articled clerk—The Naples Colour Company—Financial operations—"Black Friday"—Sunderland Villa—The Rev. Hugh M'Sorley.

CHAPTER XII.

TOTTENHAM 108

Our home—James Thomson ("B. V.")—Harriet Bradlaugh—Father and children.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER" 119

The *National Reformer* Company—The coming of Joseph Barker—Turkish baths and Secularism—The difficulties of a dual editorship—A house divided—Sole editor—G. J. Holyoake as chief contributor—More difficulties—Arbitration—Messrs Smith and Son's boycott—John Watts as editor—My father resumes—The *Saturday Review*—"B. V." replies—The Rev. Charles Voysey: 1868 and 1880.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER" AND THE GOVERNMENT PROSECUTIONS 137

Prosecution of *National Reformer* by Mr Disraeli's Government—"Published in defiance of Her Majesty's Government"—The Act of James I.—Collapse of the prosecution—The Press—The Rev. J. Page Hopps—Prosecution of *National Reformer* by Mr Gladstone's Government—Abandonment of the prosecution—John Stuart Mill—Repeal of the odious Security laws—The Postmaster-General and the *National Reformer*.

CHAPTER XV.

ITALY 152

Earning money for Garibaldi—Mazzini—An eloquent passport—Police espionage—Carrying despatches—An American sees "fair play"—The police and the Life Assurance Companies.

CHAPTER XVI.

PAGE

PLATFORM WORK, 1860-1861 158

Debate with the Rev. B. Grant at Bradford—Dr Brindley—Pursuing Mr Bradlaugh to New York—Debates with Dr Baylee and others—"Extended propaganda"—The *Wigan Examiner*—Mr Hutchings—Dispensing "justice" to the Atheist—More debates—Norwich and Yarmouth—The Yarmouth Magistrates.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DEVONPORT CASE, 1861 175

The speech in Devonport Park—Opening a fortnight's campaign—Arrest—Imprisonment—The Guildhall—A marine adventure—The case against Superintendent Edwards—Mr Robert Collier, Q.C., M.P.—Mr Montagu Smith, Q.C.—An unjust judge—The Court of Common Pleas—Lord Chief Justice Erle—Mr Justice Keating—The Court of Appeal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"KILL THE INFIDEL" 189

Religious liberty at Guernsey—Challenging the island authorities—Bill-posting extraordinary—"Kill the Infidel"—An infuriated crowd and a shrewd landlady—The courageous Harbour Master—"An act of natural justice."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROVINCIAL ADVENTURES, 1860-1863 194

Altrincham—Shaw—Sunderland—Rochdale—The Bellman of Leigh—Warrington Journalism—Dumfries—Burnley—Chesterfield—Counter attractions at Worksop—At Boardman's Edge, discussion precedes the lecture—The Dewsbury poster—Leeds—A dream of Voltaire.

CHAPTER XX.

A FREEMASON 203

The Philadelphs—The Grand Lodge of England—The Prince of Wales as Grand Master—"To the oppressed of all Nations"—Joshua B. Smith as Junior Warden to the Adelphi Lodge—"Ill winds" that blow good to a Masonic charity.

CHAPTER XXI.

PAGE
DEBATES, 1860-1866 207

The Rev. W. Barker—Thomas Cooper—A frank avowal—The Rev. Woodville Woodman again—Mr Porteous—A one-sided debate—Mr Porteous again.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE WORLD IS MY COUNTRY; TO DO GOOD IS MY RELIGION" 214

Sympathy with Garibaldi—Irish Catholic Opposition—An attempt to stab Mr Bradlaugh—Lancashire distress—"Viva la Polonia"—Death of B. B. Jones—Sheffield inundation—Help for the needy—A Hall of Science Company.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REFORM LEAGUE, 1866-1868 220

The National Reform League—Primrose Hill—Trafalgar Square—Sir Richard Mayne's prohibition—The Derby Cabinet—Hyde Park—Another prohibition—Fall of the Hyde Park railings—Agricultural Hall—Bristol—Attacks upon Mr Bradlaugh—Northampton—Luton—Matthew Arnold casts his stone—On horseback at Trafalgar Square—Agricultural Hall again—The *Saturday Review* and its followers—Hyde Park again—The Government "admonition" served and withdrawn—Mr Bradlaugh's resignation—Its result.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROVINCIAL LECTURING, 1866-1869 238

The Mayor of Liverpool—David King—Huddersfield: Arrest; Release; Before the Magistrates—The Rev. J. M'Cann—Huddersfield again—The Murphy riots at Manchester—The New Hall of Science—Blyth and Mr Thomas Burt—The "infidel" on Portsea Common—The people who loved my father—A liberal priest.

CHAPTER XXV.

IRELAND 252

English Misgovernment—The Fenian Brotherhood—Colonel Kelly and General Cluseret—The Irish proclamation of 1867—The Manchester rescue—The death sentence—The Clerkenwell explosion—Pamphlet on "the Irish Question"—A Quakers' discussion society—Lectures on behalf of Ireland—A visit to Dublin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAGE
NORTHAMPTON, 1868 263

Mr Bradlaugh's determination to seek a seat in Parliament—The choice of Northampton—First election address—Scorn of the Whigs—Enthusiasm of the people—The election colours—John Stuart Mill—*The Daily Telegraph*—The Irish Reform League—John Bright—W. E. Gladstone—Mr Charles Gilpin and Lord Henley—The press—Dr Lees—Canvassing—The Lord's Day Rest Association—Mr Giffard, Q.C.—Mr Charles Capper, M.P.—Anti-Compulsory Vaccination — The nomination day — The poll—Tributes from the Mayor and from Mr Gilpin—Ministers who rejoiced.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOUTHWARK ELECTION, 1869 280

Mr Bradlaugh and Mr Odger.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LITIGATION, 1867-1871 282

English Joint Stock Bank (Limited) and Charles Bradlaugh—Bradlaugh *v.* De Rin—The Oath question in different Courts—Confusion of the law of evidence—A costly victory—The Evidence Amendment Act, 1870—The *Razor* libel case—Mr O'Malley, Q.C.—"Outlaw or Citizen: Which am I?"—Action against the Mirfield Town Hall Company—Mr Digby Seymour, Q.C.—Mr Justice Willes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PERSONAL 299

Financial difficulties—Mr Bradlaugh gives up business in the City and devotes himself to public work—Our home sold up—A scattered family—My brother's illness and death—His burial—The Rev. Drummond Ash—The Rev. Theophilus Bennett—My father's grief.

CHAPTER XXX.

LECTURES, 1870-1871 304

Freethought and Republican activity—A full lecture list—The "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick" — A misleading announcement—Stourbridge and Lord Lyttleton—The High Bailiff of Newton Abbot—The Sowerby Bridge champion wrestler — Dr Magee at Norwich Cathedral—Mr Disraeli and the Queen—Mr Gladstone's "Questionable Book."

CHAPTER XXXI.

PAGE
FRANCE—THE WAR 312

Mr Bradlaugh's position—Republican France—Madame de Brimont—"France and Peace"—St James's Hall—Thanks of the Republican Government—Pleading for the recognition of the Republic by the English Government—The conference of European powers—M. C. Tissot.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COMMUNE, AND AFTER 322

Communist friends—An effort for peace—Arrested at Calais—Expelled from France—A second arrest—Allowed to proceed to Paris—A lecture for French refugees—Prince Jérome Napoléon—Emile de Girardin—Emanuel Arago—Léon Gambetta—Yves Guyot—A Marxist attack.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DOZEN DEBATES 332

George Jacob Holyoake and Secularism—Alexander Robertson and the Existence of Deity—The Rev. A. J. Harrison—Father Ignatius—Mr Burns and Spiritualism.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FAMILY AFFAIRS 346

Father and children—School in Paris—W. R. Bradlaugh.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REPUBLICANISM AND SPAIN 352

English Republicans—Conference at Birmingham—Mr Bradlaugh carries English congratulations to the Spanish Republicans in 1873—Adventures between Irun and Madrid.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MADRID AND AFTER 364

To Lisbon and back—Senor Castelar—Enthusiasm of the Madrid Republicans—The return journey—Reported death.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PAGE

GREAT GATHERINGS 372

The Parks Regulation Bill (1872)—Agricultural labourers at Exeter Hall—Miners' meetings in Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire—Agricultural labourers at Yeovil.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA 380

The "London Correspondents'" puff extraordinary—Welcomed on arrival in New York—The Lotos Club—O'Donovan Rossa—Financial panic—At Steinway Hall—Stephen Pearl Andrews and Mrs Victoria Woodhull: a contrast—Wendell Phillips—Charles Sumner—William Lloyd Garrison—Henry Wilson—Joshua B. Smith—An accident at Kansas City—Carlile's daughters at Chicago—Ralph Waldo Emerson—Julia Ward Howe—Dissolution of Parliament—Return to England.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TWO NORTHAMPTON ELECTIONS, 1874 392

The first General Election under the Ballot Act—Northampton and its absent candidate—Reception on his return—Charles Gilpin's recommendation: his death—The bye-election—Mr William Fowler—The bitterness of the contest—Departure for the United States on the night of the poll—Rioting at Northampton—Hostile camps—Better counsels prevail.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD.

ALTHOUGH there has often been desultory talk among us concerning the origin of the Bradlaugh family, there has never been any effort made to trace it out. The name is an uncommon one: as far as I am aware, ours is the only family that bears it, and when the name comes before the public ours is the pride or the shame—for, unfortunately, there are black sheep in every flock. I have heard a gentleman (an Irishman) assure Mr Bradlaugh that he was of Irish origin, for was not the Irish "lough" close akin to the termination "laugh"? Others have said he was of Scotch extraction, and others again that he must go to the red-haired Dane to look for his forbears. My father would only laugh lazily—he took no vivid interest in his particular ancestors of a few centuries ago—and reply that he could not go farther back than his grandfather, who came from Suffolk; in his boyhood he had heard that there were some highly respectable relations at Wickham Market, in Suffolk. But so little did the matter trouble him that he never verified it, though, if it were true, it would rather point to the Danish origin, for parts of Suffolk were undoubtedly colonized by the Danes in the ninth century, and a little fact which came to our knowledge a few years ago shows that the name Bradlaugh is no new one in that province.

Kelsall and Laxfield,* where there were Bradlaughs in the beginning of the 17th century; Wickham Market and Brandeston, whence Mr Bradlaugh's grandfather came at the beginning of the 19th, and where there are Bradlaughs at the present day, are all within a narrow radius of a few miles. The name Bradlaugh commenced to be corrupted into Bradley prior to 1628, as may be seen from a stone in Laxfield Church, and has also been so corrupted by a branch of the family within our own knowledge. The name has also, I know, been spelled "Bradlough."

James Bradlaugh, who came from Brandeston about the year 1807, was a gunsmith, and settled for a time in Bride Lane, Fleet Street, where his son Charles, his fourth and last child, was born in February 1811. He himself died in October of the same year, at the early age of thirty-one.

Charles Bradlaugh (the elder) was in due course apprenticed to a law stationer, and consequently this became his nominal profession; in reality, he was confidential clerk to a firm of solicitors, Messrs Lepard & Co. The apprentice was, on the occasion of some great trial, lent to Messrs Lepard, and the mutual satisfaction seems to have been so great that it was arranged that he should remain with them, compensation being paid for the cancelling of his indentures. I have beside me at the moment a letter, yellow and faded, dated July 30th, 1831, inquiring of "——Batchelour, Esq.," concerning the character of "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh," with the answer copied on the back, in which the writer begs "leave to state that I have a high opinion of him both as regards his moral character and industrious habits, and that he is worthy of any confidence you may think proper to place in him."

Charles Bradlaugh stayed with these solicitors until his death in 1852, when the firm testified their appreciation of his services

---

* A friend studying the *Topographer and Genealogist* found the following extract in Vol. II.:—

"Hoxne Hundred.

"Kelsall Church. Brass; no figure. John Parker, gent., who married Dorothy Bradlaugh, alias Jacob; died 24 April, 1605, aged 66.

"Laxfield Church. On a stone which had the figure of a man and two women still remains a shield with the arms of Bradlaugh alias Jacob."

"A stone in the north wall of the vestry for Nicholas Bradley alias Jacob, buried 8th August, 1628."

by putting an obituary notice in the *Times*, stating that he had been "for upwards of twenty years the faithful and confidential clerk of Messrs Lepard & Co., of 6 Cloak Lane." He married a nursemaid named Elizabeth Trimby, and on September 26th, 1833, was born their first child, who was named Charles after his father. He was born in a small house in Bacchus Walk, Hoxton. The houses in Bacchus Walk are small four-roomed tenements; I am told that they have been altered and improved since 1833, but I do not think the improvement can have been great, for the little street has a desperate air of squalor and poverty; and when I went there the other day, Number 5, where my father was born, could not be held to be in any way conspicuous in respect of superior cleanliness. But in such a street cleanliness would seem to be almost an impossibility. From Bacchus Walk the family went to Birdcage Walk, where I have heard there was a large garden in which my grandfather assiduously cultivated dahlias, for he seems to have been passionately fond of flowers. Soon the encroaching tide of population caused their garden to be taken for building purposes, and they removed to Elizabeth Street, and again finally to 13 Warner Place South, a little house nominally of seven rooms, then rented at seven shillings per week.

The family, which ultimately numbered seven, two of whom died in early childhood, was in very straitened circumstances, so much so that they were glad to receive presents of clothing from a generous cousin at Teddington, to eke out the father's earnings. The salary of Charles Bradlaugh, sen., at the time of his death, after "upwards of twenty years" of "faithful" service, was two guineas a week, with a few shillings additional for any extra work he might do. He was an exquisite penman; he could write the "Lord's Prayer" quite clearly and distinctly in the size and form of a sixpence; and he was extremely industrious. Very little is known of his tastes; he was exceedingly fond of flowers, and wherever he was he cultivated his garden, large or small, with great care; he was an eager fisherman, and would often get up at three in the morning and walk from Hackney to Temple Mills on the river Lea, with his son running by his side, bait-can in hand. He wrote articles upon Fishing, which were reprinted as late as a year or two ago in a paper devoted to angling, and also contributed a number of small things under the signature C. B———h to the *London Mirror*, but little was known about

this, as he seems usually to have been very reticent and reserved, even in his own family. He had his children baptized—his son Charles was baptized on December 8th, 1833—but otherwise he seems to have been fairly indifferent on religious matters, and never went to church.

This is about all that is known concerning my grandfather up till about the time of his son's conflict with the Rev. J. G. Packer, and what steps he took then will be told in the proper place. His son Charles always spoke of him with tenderness and affection, as, indeed, he also did of his mother; nevertheless, he never seemed able to recall any incident of greater tenderness on the part of his father than that of allowing him to go with him on his early morning fishing excursions. Mrs Bradlaugh belonged undoubtedly to what we regard to-day as "the old school." Severe, exacting, and imperious with her children, she was certainly not a bad mother, but she was by no means a tender or indulgent one. The following incident is characteristic of her treatment of her children. One Christmas time, when my father and his sister Elizabeth (his junior by twenty-one months) were yet small children, visitors were expected, and some loaf sugar was bought—an unusual luxury in such poor households in those times. The visitors, with whom came a little boy, arrived in due course, but when the tea hour was reached, it was discovered that nearly all the sugar was gone. The two elder children, Charles and Elizabeth, were both charged with the theft; they denied it, but were disbelieved and forthwith sent to bed. They listened for the father's home-coming in the hope of investigation and release; there they both lay unheeded in their beds, sobbing and unconsoled, until their grandmother brought them a piece of cake and soothed them with tender words. Then it ultimately appeared that it was the little boy visitor who stole the sugar; but the children never forgot the dreadful misery of being unjustly punished. The very last time the brother and sister were together, they were recalling and laughing over the agony they endured over that stolen sugar.

At the age of seven the little Charles went to school: first of all to the National School, where the teacher had striking ideas upon the value of corporal punishment, and enforced his instructions with the ruler so heavily that the scar resulting from a wound so inflicted was deemed of sufficient importance some nine or ten

years later to be marked in the enlistment description when Mr Bradlaugh joined the army. Leaving the National School, he went first to a small private school, and then to a boys' school kept by a Mr Marshall in Coldharbour Street; all poor schools enough as we reckon schools to-day, but the best the neighbourhood and his father's means could afford. Such as it was, however, his schooling came to an end when he was eleven years old.

I have by me some interesting mementoes of those same school-days—namely, specimens of his "show" handwriting at the age of seven, nine, and ten years. The writing is done on paper ornamented (save the mark!) by coloured illustrations drawn from the Bible. The first illustrates in wonderful daubs of yellow, crimson, and blue, passages in the life of Samuel; in the centre is a text written in a child's unsteady, unformed script; and at the bottom, flanked on either side by yellow urns disgorging yellow and scarlet flames, come the signature and date written in smaller and even more unsteady letters than the text, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 7 years, Christmas, 1840." The second specimen is adorned with truly awful illustrations concerning "the death of Ahab," not exactly suggestive of that "peace and goodwill" of which we hear so much and sometimes see so little. The writing shows an enormous improvement, and is really a beautiful specimen of a child's work. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 9 years, Christmas, 1842," is firmly and clearly written. The third piece represents the "Death of Absalom" (the teacher who gave out these things seems to have been of a singularly dismal turn of mind), with illustrations from 2 Sam. xiv. and xviii. The writing here has more character; there is more light and shade in the up and down strokes, as well as more freedom. As an instance of the humane nature of the teaching, I quote the text selected to show off the writing: "Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men of Joab's smote Absalom and slew him." As a lesson in sheer wanton cruelty this can hardly be exceeded. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged ten years, Christmas, 1843," which is surrounded by sundry pen-and-ink ornaments is, like the text, written with a much freer hand than that of the other specimens.

The boy's amusements—apart from the prime one of going

fishing with his father, which he did when eight years old—consisted chiefly in playing at sham fights with steel nibs for soldiers, and dramatic performances of "The Miller and his Men," enacted by *artistes* cut out of newspaper. Then there was the more sober joy of listening to an old gentleman and ardent Radical, named Brand, who took a great affection for the lad, and used to explain to him the politics of the day, and doubtless by his talk inspired him to plunge into the intricacies of Cobbett's "Political Gridiron," which he found amongst his father's books, and from that to the later and more daring step of buying a halfpenny copy of the People's Charter.

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD.

Now came the time when the little Charles Bradlaugh should put aside his childhood and make a beginning in the struggle for existence. His earnings were required to help in supplying the needs of the growing family; and at twelve years old he was made office boy with a salary of five shillings a week at Messrs Lepard's, where his father was confidential clerk. In later years, in driving through London with him, he has many a time pointed out to me the distances he used to run to save the omnibus fare allowed him, and how if he had to cross the water he would run round by London Bridge to save the toll. The money thus saved he would spend in books bought at second-hand book-stalls, outside of which he might generally be found reading at any odd moments of leisure. One red-letter day his firm sent him on an errand to the company of which Mr Mark E. Marsden was the secretary. Mr Marsden, whose name will be remembered and honoured by many for his unceasing efforts for political and social progress, chatted with the lad, asking him many questions, and finished up by giving him a bun and half-a-crown. As both of these were luxuries which rarely came in the office boy's way, they made a great impression on him. He never forgot the incident, although it quite passed out of Mr Marsden's mind, and he was unable to recall it when the two became friends in after years.

The errand-running came to an end when my father was fourteen, at which age he was considered of sufficient dignity to be promoted to the office of wharf clerk and cashier to Messrs Green, Son, & Jones, coal merchants at Brittania Fields, City Road, at a salary of eleven shillings a week. About this time, too, partly impelled by curiosity and swayed by the fervour of the political movement then going on around him, but also

undoubtedly with a mind prepared for the good seed by the early talks with old Mr Brand, he went to several week-evening meetings then being held in Bonner's Fields and elsewhere. It was in 1847 that he first saw William Lovett, at a Chartist meeting which he attended. His Sundays were devoted to religion; from having been an eager and exemplary Sunday school scholar he had now become a most promising Sunday school teacher; so that although discussions were held at Bonner's Fields almost continually through the day every Sunday, they were not for him: *he* was fully occupied with his duties at the Church of St Peter's, in Hackney Road.

At this time the Rev. John Graham Packer was incumbent at St Peter's; and when it was announced that the Bishop of London intended to hold a confirmation at Bethnal Green, Mr Packer naturally desired to make a good figure before his clerical superior. He therefore selected the best lads in his class for confirmation, and bade them prepare themselves for the important occasion. To this end Charles Bradlaugh carefully studied and compared the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the four Gospels, and it was not long before he found, to his dismay, that they did not agree, and that he was totally unable to reconcile them. "Thorough" in this as in all else, he was anxious to understand the discrepancies he found and to be put right. He therefore, he tells us, "ventured to write Mr Packer a respectful letter, asking him for his aid and explanation." Instead of help there came a bolt from the blue. Mr Packer had the consummate folly to write Mr Bradlaugh senior, denouncing his son's inquiries as Atheistical, and followed up his letter by suspending his promising pupil for three months from his duties of Sunday-school teacher.

This three months of suspension was pregnant with influence for him; for one thing it gave him opportunities which he had heretofore lacked, and thus brought him into contact with persons of whom up till then he had scarcely heard. The lad, horrified at being called an Atheist, and forbidden his Sunday school, naturally shrank from going to church. It may well be imagined also that under the ban of his parents' disapproval home was no pleasant place, and it is little to be wondered at that he wandered off to Bonner's Fields. Bonner's Fields was in those days a great place for open-air meetings. Discussions on every possible subject

were held; on the week evenings the topics were mostly political, but on Sundays theological or anti-theological discourses were as much to the fore as politics. In consequence of my father's own theological difficulties, he was naturally attracted to a particular group where such points were discussed with great energy Sunday after Sunday. After listening a little, he was roused to the defence of his Bible and his Church, and, finding his tongue, joined in the debate on behalf of orthodox Christianity.

The little group of Freethinkers to which Mr Bradlaugh was thus drawn were energetic and enthusiastic disciples of Richard Carlile. Their out-door meetings were mostly held at Bonner's Fields or Victoria Park, and the in-door meetings at a place known as Eree's Coffee House. In the year 1848 it was agreed that they should subscribe together and have a Temperance Hall of their own for their meetings. To this end three of them, Messrs Barralet, Harvey, and Harris, became securities for the lease of No. 1 Warner Place, then a large old-fashioned dwelling-house; and a Hall was built out at the back. As the promoters were anxious to be of service to Mrs Sharples Carlile, who after the death of Richard Carlile was left with her three children in very poor circumstances, they invited her to undertake the superintendence of the coffee room, and to reside at Warner Place with her daughters Hypatia and Theophila and her son Julian.

When my father first met her, Mrs Sharples Carlile, then about forty-five years of age, was a woman of considerable attainments. She belonged to a very respectable and strictly religious family at Bolton; was educated in the Church with her two sisters under the Rev. Mr Thistlethwaite; and, to use an expression of her own, was "quite an evangelical being, sang spiritual songs, and prayed myself into the grave almost." Her mind, however, was not quite of the common order, and perhaps the excess of ardour with which she had thrown herself into her religious pursuits made the recoil more easy and more decided. Be this as it may, it is nevertheless remarkable that, surrounded entirely by religious people, reading no anti-theological literature, she unaided thought herself out of "the doctrines of the Church." After some two-and-a-half-years of this painful evolution, accident made her acquainted with a Mr Hardie, a follower of Carlile's. He seems to have lent her what was at that time called "infidel literature," and so inspired her with the most ardent enthusiasm for Richard Carlile, and in a less

degree for the Rev. Robert Taylor. On the 11th January 1832, whilst Carlile was undergoing one of the many terms of imprisonment to which he was condemned for conscience' sake, Miss Sharples came to London, and on the 29th of the same month she gave her first lecture at the Rotunda.

On the 11th of February this young woman of barely twenty-eight summers, but one month escaped from the trammels of life in a country town, amidst a strictly religious environment, started a "weekly publication" called *Isis*, dedicated to "The young women of England for generations to come or until superstition is extinct." The *Isis* was published at sixpence, and contains many of Miss Sharples' discourses both on religious and political subjects. In religion she was a Deist; in politics a Radical and Republican; thus following in the footsteps of her leader Richard Carlile. I have been looking through the volume of the *Isis;* it is all very "proper" (as even Mrs Grundy would have to confess), and I am bound to say that the stilted phrases and flowery turns of speech of sixty years ago are to me not a little wearisome; but with all its defects, it is an enduring record of the ability, knowledge, and courage of Mrs Sharples Carlile. She reprints some amusing descriptions of herself from the religious press; and were I not afraid of going too much out of my way, I would reproduce them here with her comments in order that we might picture her more clearly; but although this would be valuable in view of the evil use made of her name in connection with her kindness to my father, it would take me too far from the definite purpose of my work. In her preface to the volume, written in 1834, she thus defends her union with Richard Carlile:—

"There are those who reproach my marriage. They are scarcely worth notice; but this I have to say for myself, that nothing could have been more pure in morals, more free from venality. It was not only a marriage of two bodies, but a marriage of two congenial spirits; or two minds reasoned into the same knowledge of true principles, each seeking an object on which virtuous affection might rest, and grow, and strengthen. And though we passed over a legal obstacle, it was only because it could not be removed, and was not in a spirit of violation of the law, nor of intended offence or injury to any one. A marriage more pure and moral was never formed and continued in England. It was what marriage should be, though not perhaps altogether what marriage is in the majority

of cases. They who are married equally moral, will not find fault with mine; but where marriage is merely of the law or for money, and not of the soul, there I look for abuse." *

Of course, all this happened long before Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with Mrs Carlile; when he knew her, sixteen or seventeen years later, she was a broken woman, who had had her ardour and enthusiasm cooled by suffering and poverty, a widow with three children, of whom Hypatia, the eldest, could not have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old at the most. I have been told by those who knew Mrs Carlile in those days that in spite of all this she still had a most noble presence, and looked and moved "like a queen." Her gifts, however, they said, with smiles, certainly did not lie in attending to the business of the coffee room —at that she was "no good." She was quiet and reserved, and although Christians have slandered her both during her lifetime and up till within this very year on account of her non-legalised union with Richard Carlile, she was looked up to and revered by those who knew her, and never was a whisper breathed against her fair fame.

Amongst the frequenters of the Warner Street Temperance Hall

---

* In the *Gauntlet* for Sept. 22nd, 1833, Carlile, who had been formally separated from his wife nine months previously, says :—

"Many months did not elapse before we stood pledged to a moral marriage, and to a resolution to avow that marriage immediately after my liberation. I took the first opportunity of doing it, as I now take the first of explaining the introduction. As a public man, I will be associated with nothing that is to be concealed from the public. Many, I know, will carp upon my freedom as to divorce and marriage; and to such persons I say, if they are worth a word, that I do so because I hate hypocrisy, because I hate everything that is foul and indecent, because I will not deceive any one. I have led a miserable wedded life through twenty years, from disparity of mind and temper; and, for the next twenty, I have resolved to have a wife in whom I may find a companion and helpmate. . . . . I will make one woman happy, and I will not make any other woman unhappy. RICHARD CARLILE.

"*P.S.*—I would not have intruded this matter upon the public notice had it not been intended that the lady, as well as myself, will continue to lecture publicly. We are above deception. Our creed is truth, and our morals nothing but is morally and reasonably to be defended. Priestcraft hath no law for us; but every virtue, everything that is good and useful to human nature in society, has its binding law on us. We will practise every virtue and war with every vice. This is our moral marriage and our bond of union. Who shall show against it any just cause or impediment?"

I find the names of Messrs Harvey, Colin Campbell, the brothers Savage,* the brothers Barralet, Tobias Taylor, Edward Cooke, and others, of whom most Freethinkers have heard something. They seem to have been rather wild, compared with the sober dignity of the John Street Institution, especially in the way of lecture bills with startling announcements, reminding one somewhat of the modern Salvation Army posters. The neighbourhood looked with no favourable eye upon the little hall, and I am told that one night, when a baby was screaming violently next door, a rumour got about that the "infidels" were sacrificing a baby, and the place was stormed by an angry populace, who were with difficulty appeased.

It was to this little group of earnest men that the youth Charles Bradlaugh was introduced in 1848, as one eager to debate, and enthusiastically determined to convert them all to the "true religion" in which he had been brought up. He discussed with Colin Campbell, a smart and fluent debater; he argued with James Savage, a man of considerable learning, a cool and calm reasoner, and a deliberate speaker, whose speech on occasion was full of biting sarcasms; and after a discussion with the latter upon "The Inspiration of the Bible," my father admitted that he was convinced by the superior logic of his antagonist, and owning himself beaten, felt obliged to abandon his defence of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, he did not suddenly leap into Atheism: his views were for a little time inclined to Deism; but once started on the road of doubt, his careful study and—despite his youth—judicial temper, gradually brought him to the Atheistic position. With the Freethinkers of Warner Place he became a teetotaller, which was an additional offence in the eyes of the orthodox; and while still in a state of indecision on certain theological points, he submitted

* There were three of these brothers, all remarkable for their courage, pertinacity, or ability. One of them, John Savage, refused to pay taxes in 1833. The best of his goods were seized and, in spite of Mr Savage's protests, carried away in a van. There was so much feeling about the taxes at the time that no sooner did the people living in the neighbourhood (Circus Street, Marylebone) hear of the seizure than they collected in great numbers. The van was followed, taken possession of, and brought back to Circus Street. The goods were removed, the horse taken out of the shafts, and the van demolished. After the news spread throughout the metropolis the excitement became so great that the Horse Guards at the Regent's Park Barracks were put under arms. They had lively times sixty years ago.

Robert Taylor's "Diegesis" to his spiritual director, the Rev. J. G. Packer.

During all this time Mr Packer had not been idle. He obtained a foothold in my father's family, insisted on the younger children regularly attending Church and Sunday School, rocked the baby's cradle, and talked over the father and mother to such purpose that they consented to hang all round the walls of the sitting-room great square cards, furnished by him, bearing texts which he considered appropriate to the moment. One, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," was hung up in the most prominent place over the fireplace, and just opposite the place where the victim sat to take his meals. Such stupid and tactless conduct would be apt to irritate a patient person, and goad even the most feeble-spirited into some kind of rebellion; and I cannot pretend that my father was either one or the other. He glowered angrily at the texts, and was glad enough to put the house door between himself and the continuous insult put upon him at the instigation of Mr Packer. In 1860, the rev. gentleman wrote a letter described later by my father as "mendacious," in which he sought to explain away his conduct, and to make out that he had tried to restrain Mr Bradlaugh, senior. In illustration thereof, he related the following incident:—

"The father, returning home one evening, saw a board hanging at the Infidels' door announcing some discussion by Bradlaugh, in which my name was mentioned not very respectfully, which announcement so enraged the father that he took the board down and carried it home with him, the Infidels calling after him, and threatening him with a prosecution if he did not restore the placard immediately.

"When Mr Bradlaugh, senior, got home, and had had a little time for reflection, he sent for me and asked my advice, and I urged him successfully immediately to send [back] the said placard."

That little story, like certain other little stories, is extremely interesting, but unfortunately it has not the merit of accuracy. The facts of the case have been told me by my father's sister (Mrs Norman), who was less than two years younger than her brother Charles, and who, like him, is gifted with an excellent, almost unerring memory. Her story is this. One autumn night (the end of October or beginning of November) Mr Packer came to the house to see her father. He had not yet come home from his office, so Mr Packer sat down and rocked the cradle, which contained a few-

days-old baby girl. After some little time, during which Mr Packer kept to his post as self-constituted nurse, Mr Bradlaugh, sen., returned home. The two men were closeted together for a few minutes, and then went out together. It was a wild and stormy night, and Mr Bradlaugh wore one of those large cloaks that are I think called "Inverness" capes. After some time he came home, carrying under his cape two boards which he had taken away from the Warner Place Hall. He behaved like a madman, raving and stamping about, until the monthly nurse, who had long known the family, came downstairs to know what was the matter. He showed her the boards, and told her he was going to burn them. Mrs Bailey, the nurse, begged him not to do so, talked to him and coaxed him, and reminded him that he might have an action brought against him for stealing, and at length tried to induce him to let her take them back. By this time the stress of his rage was over, and she, taking his consent for granted, put on her shawl, and hiding the boards beneath it, went out into the rain and storm to replace them outside the Hall. The inference Mrs Norman drew from these proceedings was that Mr Packer had urged on her father to do what he dared not do himself. It is worthy of note that when Mrs Norman told me the story neither she nor I had read Mr Packer's version, and did not even know that he had written one.

When Mr Packer received the "Diegesis" he seems to have looked upon the sending of it as an insult, and, exercising all the influence he had been diligently acquiring over the mind of Mr Bradlaugh, sen., induced him to notify Messrs Green & Co., the coal merchants and employers of his son, that he would withdraw his security if within the space of three days his son did not alter his views. Thus Mr Packer was able to hold out to his rebellious pupil the threat that he had three days in which "to change his opinions or lose his situation."

Whether it was ever intended that this threat should be carried out it is now impossible to determine. Mr Bradlaugh, who seldom failed to find a word on behalf of those who tried to injure him—even for Mr Newdegate and Lord Randolph Churchill he could find excuses when any of us resented their bigoted or spiteful persecution—said in his "Autobiography," written in 1873, that he thought the menace was used to terrify him into submission, and that there was no real intention of enforcing it. Looking at

the whole circumstances, and from a practical point of view, this seems likely. One is reluctant to believe that a father would permit himself to be influenced by his clergyman to the extent of depriving his son of the means of earning his bread. His own earnings were so scanty that he could ill afford to throw away his son's salary, especially if he would have to keep him in addition. The one strong point in favour of the harsher view is that when the son took the threat exactly to the letter, the father never called him back or made a sign from which might be gathered that he had been misunderstood; and he suffered the boy to go without one word to show that the ultimatum had been taken too literally.

At the time, at any rate, my father had no doubt as to the full import of the threat. He took it in all its naked harshness—three days in which to change his opinions or lose his situation. To a high-spirited lad, to lose his situation under such circumstances meant of course to lose his home, for he could not eat the bread of idleness at such a cost, even had the father been willing to permit it. On the third day, therefore, he packed his scanty belongings, parted from his dear sister Elizabeth, with tears and kisses and a little parting gift, which she treasures to this hour, and thus left his home. From that day almost until his death his life was one long struggle against the bitterest animosity which religious bigotry could inspire. In the face of all this he pursued the path he had marked out for himself without once swerving, and although the cost was great, in the end he always triumphed in his undertakings—up to the very last, when the supreme triumph came as his life was ebbing away in payment for it, and when he was beyond caring for the good or evil opinion of any man.

It is now the fashion to make Mr Packer into a sort of scapegoat: his harsh reception of his pupil's questions and subsequent ill-advised methods of dealing with him are censured, and he is in a manner made responsible for my father's Atheism. If no other Christian had treated Mr Bradlaugh harshly; if every other clergyman had dealt with him in kindly fashion; if he had been met with kindness instead of slanders and stones, abuse and ill-usage, then these censors of Mr Packer might have some just grounds on which to reproach him for misusing his position; as it is, they should ask themselves which among them has the right

to cast the first stone. The notion that it was Mr Packer's treatment of him that drove my father into Atheism is, I am sure, absolutely baseless. Those who entertain this belief forget that Mr Bradlaugh had already begun to compare and criticise the various narratives in the four Gospels, and that it was on account of this (and therefore after it) that the Rev. J. G. Packer was so injudicious as to denounce him as an Atheist, and to suspend him from his Sunday duties. This harsh and blundering method of dealing with him no doubt hastened his progress towards Atheism, but it assuredly did not induce it. It set his mind in a state of opposition to the Church as represented by Mr Packer, a state which the rev. gentleman seems blindly to have fostered by every means in his power; and it gave him the opportunity of the Sunday's leisure to hear what Atheism really was, expounded by some of the cleverest speakers in the Freethought movement at that time. But in spite of all this, he was not driven pell-mell into Atheism; he joined in the religious controversy from the orthodox standpoint, and was introduced into the little Warner Place Hall as an eager champion on behalf of Christianity.

Those persons too who entertain this idea of Mr Packer's responsibility are ignorant of, or overlook, what manner of man Mr Bradlaugh was. He could not rest with his mind unsettled or undecided; he worked out and solved for himself every problem which presented itself to him. He moulded his ideas on no man's: he looked at the problem on all sides, studied the pros and cons, and decided the solution for himself. Therefore, having once started on the road to scepticism, kindlier treatment would no doubt have made him longer in reaching the standpoint of pure Rationalism, but in any case the end would have been the same.

CHAPTER III.

YOUTH.

Driven from home because he refused to be a hypocrite, Charles Bradlaugh stood alone in the world at sixteen; cut off from kindred and former friends, with little or nothing in the way of money or clothes, and with the odium of Atheist attached to his name in lieu of character. To seek a situation seemed useless: what was to be done? To whom should he turn for help and sympathy if not to those for whose opinions he was now suffering? To these he went, and they, scarce richer than himself, welcomed him with open arms. An old Chartist and Freethinker, a Mr B. B. Jones, gave him hospitality for a week, while he cast about for means of earning a livelihood. Mr Jones was an old man of seventy; and in after years, when he had grown too feeble to do more than earn a most precarious livelihood by selling Freethought publications, Mr Bradlaugh had several times the happiness of being able to show his gratitude practically by lecturing and getting up a fund for his benefit. Having learned something about the coal trade whilst with Messrs Green, my father determined to try his fortune as a "coal merchant;" but unhappily he had no capital, and consequently required to be paid for the coals before he himself could get them to supply his customers. Under these circumstances it is hardly wonderful that his business was small. He, however, got together a few customers, and managed to earn a sufficient commission to keep him in bread and cheese. He had some cards printed, and in a boyish spirit of bravado pushed one under his father's door. Mr Headingley, in the "Biography of Mr Bradlaugh" that he wrote in 1880, gives the story of the "principal customer" in pretty much the very words in which he heard it, so I reproduce it here intact:—

"Bradlaugh's principal customer was the good-natured wife of a baker, whose shop was situated at the corner of Goldsmith's Road. As

she required several tons of coal per week to bake the bread, the commission on this transaction amounted to about ten shillings a week, and this constituted the principal source of Bradlaugh's income. The spirit of persecution, however, was abroad. Some kind friend considerately informed the baker's wife that Bradlaugh was in the habit of attending meetings of Secularists and Freethinkers, where he had been known to express very unorthodox opinions. This was a severe blow to the good lady. She had always felt great commiseration for Bradlaugh's forlorn condition, and a certain pride in herself for helping him in his distress. When, therefore, he called again for orders she exclaimed at once, but still with her wonted familiarity—

"'Charles, I hear you are an Infidel!'

"At that time Bradlaugh was not quite sure whether he was an Infidel or not; but he instinctively foresaw that the question addressed him might interfere with the smooth and even course of his business; he therefore deftly sought to avoid the difficulty by somewhat exaggerating the importance of the latest fluctuation in the coal market.

"The stratagem was of no avail. His kind but painfully orthodox customer again returned to the charge, and then Bradlaugh had to fall back upon the difficulty of defining the meaning of the word Infidel, in which line of argument he evidently failed to produce a favourable impression. Again and again he tried to revert to the more congenial subject of a reduction in the price of coals, and when, finally, he pressed hard for the usual order, the interview was brought to a close by the baker's wife. She declared in accents of firm conviction, which have never been forgotten, that she could not think of having any more coals from an Infidel.

"'I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone,' she added with a shudder."

It always strikes me as a little odd that orthodox people, who believe that the heretic will have to undergo an eternity of punishment—a punishment so awful that a single hour of it would amply suffice to avenge even a greater crime than the inability to believe—yet regard that as insufficient, and do what they can on earth to give the unbeliever a foretaste of the heavenly mercy to come. This little story of the kind-hearted woman turned from her kindness by some bigoted busybody is a mild case in point. Such people put a premium on hypocrisy, and make the honest avowal of opinion a crime.

In so limited a business the loss of the chief customer was naturally a serious matter; and although the young coal merchant struggled on for some time longer, he was at last obliged to seek

for other means of earning his bread. For a little while he tried selling buckskin braces on commission for Mr Thomas J. Barnes. Mr Barnes gave him a breakfast at starting in the morning, and a dinner on his return at night, but as he could only sell a limited quantity of the braces he grew ever poorer and poorer.

Early in my father's troubles, Mrs Carlile and her children seem to have taken a warm liking for him. He shared Julian Carlile's bed, and there was always a place at the family table—such as it was—whenever he wanted it. He read Hebrew with Mr James Savage, and in turn taught Hebrew and Greek to Mr Thomas Barralet, then a young man of his own age, his particular friend and companion at the time. With the Carlile children he had lessons in French from Mr Harvey, an old friend of Richard Carlile's. These "French" days, I can readily believe, were altogether red-letter days. Usually, from motives of economy, the *menu* was made up on a strictly vegetarian basis; but when Mr Harvey came he invariably invited himself to dinner, and having a little more money than most of the others, he always provided the joint. Mr Bradlaugh says in his "Autobiography" that while with the Carliles he picked up "a little Hebrew and an imperfect smattering of other tongues." Then and with subsequent study he acquired a good knowledge of Hebrew; French he could read and speak (although with a somewhat English accent) as easily as his own tongue; he knew a little Arabic and Greek; and he could make his way through Latin, Italian, or Spanish, though of German and its allied languages he knew nothing.

It was whilst under Mrs Carlile's roof my father fell in love with Hypatia, Mrs Carlile's eldest daughter; and this fleeting attachment of a boy and girl (or rather, I should say of a boy *for* a girl, for I know that Miss Carlile laughed at my father's pretensions, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that she felt anything more than a sisterly affection for him) would hardly be worth alluding to had not a whole scandal been built upon it. As far as I can trace, the vile and iniquitous statements that have been made as to the relations between my father and Hypatia Carlile—he between sixteen and seventeen, and she a year or two younger—originated with the Rev. J. G. Packer and the Rev. Brewin Grant; and since Mr Bradlaugh's death there have not been wanting worthy disciples of these gentlemen, who have

endeavoured to revive these unwarranted accusations. Mrs Carlile was also vaguely accused of making "a tool" of the lad, and involving him in money transactions!—— It is not easy to sympathise with the temper which makes people so unable to understand the generous heart of a woman who, herself desperately poor, could yet freely share the crumbs of her poverty with one whose need was even greater than her own, and give a home and family to the lad who had forfeited his own purely for conscience' sake.

As after my father left home he was chiefly sheltered by the Carliles at 1 Warner Place, I cannot imagine what Mr Headingley* means by saying that Mr Bradlaugh was saved the anxiety of pursuit by his parents. There was no necessity for pursuit; he was never at any time far from home, and for the most part was in the same street, only a few doors off. His parents knew where he was; he was often up and down their street; and his sister Elizabeth would watch to see him pass, or would loiter about near the Temperance Hall to catch a glimpse of her brother. She was peremptorily forbidden to exchange a word with him; and when they passed in the street, this loving brother and sister, who were little more than children in years, would look at each other, and not daring to speak, would both burst into tears. In spite of all this I never heard my father say an unkind or bitter, or even a merely reproachful word about either of his parents.

Having once begun to speak at the open-air meetings in Bonner's Fields, he continued speaking there or at Victoria Park, Sunday after Sunday, during the day, and in the evening at the Warner Place Temperance Hall, or at a small Temperance Hall in Philpot Street. I am also informed that he lectured on Temperance at the *Wheatsheaf* in Mile End Road. The *British Banner* for July 31st, 1850, contains a letter signed D. J. E., on "Victoria Park on the Lord's Day." The writer, after dwelling at length upon the sinfulness and general iniquity of the Sunday frequenters of the park, who, he affirmed, sauntered in "sinful idleness" . . . . "willing listeners to the harangues of the Chartist, the Socialist, the infidel and scoffer," goes on to say of my father:—

"The stump orator for the real scoffing party is an overgrown boy of seventeen, with such an uninformed mind, that it is really amusing to

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

see him sometimes stammering and spluttering on in his ignorant eloquence, making the most ludicrous mistakes, making all history to suit his private convenience, and often calling yea nay, and nay yea, when it will serve his purpose. He is styled by the frequenters of the park as the 'baby'; and I believe he is listened to very often m re from real curiosity to know what one so young will say, than from any love the working men have to his scoffings."

At the conclusion of a long letter, the writer says :—

"It gives me great delight to state that the working men have no real sympathy with Infidels and scoffers, but would far sooner listen to an exposition of the Word of God. To give you an instance. One Sunday I opposed the 'baby' of whom I have spoken, and instantly there was a space cleared for us, and an immense ring formed around us. The Infidel spoke first, and I replied; he spoke again, and was in the midst of uttering some dreadful blasphemy, copied from Paine's 'Age of Reason,' when the people could suppress their indignation no longer, but uttered one loud cry of disapprobation. When silence had been obtained, I addressed to them again a few serious kind words, and told them that if they wish me to read to them the Word of God, I would do so; that if they wished me to pray with them, I would do so. Upon my saying this, nearly all the company left the Infidel, and repaired to an adjoining tree, where I read and expounded the Word of God with them for about an hour."

In this first press notice of himself Mr Bradlaugh had an introductory specimen of the accuracy, justice, and generosity, of which he was later to receive so many striking examples from the English press generally, and the London and Christian press in particular.

In attending Freethought meetings Charles Bradlaugh became acquainted with Austin Holyoake, and a friendship sprang up between these two which ended only with the death of Mr Holyoake in 1874. By Austin Holyoake he was taken to the John Street Institution, and by him also he was introduced to his elder and more widely-known brother, Mr George Jacob Holyoake, who took the chair for him at a lecture on the "Past, Present, and Future of Theology" at the Temperance Hall, Commercial Road. Mr G. J. Holyoake, in a sketch of my father's life and career written in 1891, says :—

"It will interest many to see what was the beginning of his splendid career on the platform, to copy the only little handbill in existence Only a few weeks before his death, looking over an old diary, which

I had not opened for forty-one years, I found the bill, of which I enclose you the facsimile. It is Bradlaugh's first placard:—

LECTURE HALL,

PHILPOT ST., (3 DOORS FROM COMMERCIAL ROAD).

A LECTURE

WILL BE DELIVERED BY

CHARLES BRADLAUGH, JUN.,

On Friday, October the 10th, 1850,

SUBJECT:

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THEOLOGY.

MR GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE,

Editor of the "Reasoner,"

WILL TAKE THE CHAIR AT EIGHT O'CLOCK PRECISELY.

A Collection will be made after the Lecture for the Benefit of C. Bradlaugh, victim of the Rev. J. G. Packer, of St. Peter's, Hackney Road.

"Being his first public friend, I was asked to take the chair for him. Bradlaugh's subject was a pretty extensive one for the first lecture of a youth of seventeen, who looked more like fourteen as he stood up in a youth's round jacket; but he spoke with readiness, confidence, and promise."

In May 1850, "at the age of 16 years 7½ months," Mr Bradlaugh wrote an "Examination of the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with remarks on the life and death of the meek and lowly Jesus." This he "altered and amended" in June 1854, but it was never published. In the preface, written in 1850, he says, "I think I can prove that there did exist a man named Jesus χρηστος the good man," but in 1854 he no longer adheres to this position, and adds a note: "I would not defend the existence of Jesus as a man at all, although I have not sufficient evidence to deny it." Through the kindness of a friend I am in possession of the MS. volume containing this "Examination," which, apart from its value to me personally, is extremely interesting as showing how carefully my father went about his work, even at an age when

many lads are still at school. A month or so after writing this critical examination, "C. Bradlaugh, jun.," published his first pamphlet, entitled, "A Few Words on the Christian's Creed." To the Rev. J. G. Packer he dedicated his first printed attack upon orthodox Christianity, addressing him in the following words:—

"Sir,—Had the misfortunes which I owe to your officious interference been less than they are, and personal feeling left any place in my mind for deliberation or for inquiry in selecting a proper person to whom to dedicate these few remarks, I should have found myself directed, by many considerations, to the person of the Incumberer of St Peter's, Hackney Road. A life spent in division from part of your flock, and in crushing those whom you could not answer, may well entitle you to the respect of all true bigots.—Hoping that you will be honoured as you deserve, I am, Reverend Sir, yours truly, C. Bradlaugh."

At the end of October in the same year he sent "a report of the closing season's campaign in Bonner's Fields, Victoria Park," to the *Reasoner*, from which I take an extract, not without interest for the light it throws upon the manners and methods then common at these out-door assemblies:—

"In May last, when I joined the fray, the state of affairs was as follows: In front of us, near the park gates, were stationed some two or three of the followers of the Victoria Park Mission, who managed to get a moderate attendance of hearers; on our extreme left was the Rev. Henry Robinson, who mustered followers to the amount of three or four hundred; on our right, and close to our place of meeting, was erected the tent of the Christian Instruction Society; sometimes, also, in our midst we have had the Rev. Mr Worrall, V.D.M., who gives out in his chapel one Sunday that infidelity is increasing, and that there must be fresh subscriptions for more Sunday-school teachers (who are never paid), and the next Sunday announces in the Fields that infidelity is dying away. Besides these, we have had Dr Oxley, and some dozens of tract distributors, who seemed to have no end to their munificence—not forgetting Mr Harwood, and a few other irregular preachers, who told us how wicked they had been in their youth, and what a mercy it was the Lord had changed them.

"When I first came out I attracted a little extra attention on account of my having been a Sunday-school teacher, and therefore had more opposition than some of our other friends; and as the Freethinking party did not muster quite so well as they do now, I met with some very unpleasant occurrences. One Monday evening in particular I was well stoned, and some friends both saw and heard several Christians

urging the boys to pelt me. As, however, the attendance of the Freethinkers grew more regular, these minor difficulties vanished. But more serious ones rose in their place. George Offer, Esq., of Hackney, and Dr Oxley, intimated to the police that I ought not to be allowed to speak; and a Christian gentleman whose real name and address we could never get, but who passed by the name of Tucker, after pretending that he was my friend to Mrs Carlile, and learning all he could of me, appeared in the Park and made the most untrue charges. When he found he was being answered, he used to beckon the police and have me moved on. . . . . I happened to walk up to the Fields one evening, when I saw some of the bills announcing our lecture at Warner Place pulled down from the tree on which they had been placed. I immediately renewed them, and on the religious persons attempting to pull the bills down again I defended them; and one gentleman having broken a parasol over my arm in attempting to tear the bills, the congregation, of which Mr Robinson was the leader, became furious. The pencil of Cruikshank would have given an instructive and curious picture of the scene. They were crying out, men and women too, 'Down with him!' 'Have him down!' And here the scene would have been very painful to my feelings, for down they would have had me had not my own party gathered round, on which a treaty of peace was come to on the following terms, viz. that the man who tried to pull the bills down should guard them to keep them up as long as the religious people stayed there. Mr Robinson applied for a warrant against me, but the magistrate refused to grant it."

On another occasion, when some people whom he and Mr James Savage had been addressing in the Park had become unduly excited by a Scotch preacher, who politely informed them that they were "a generation of vipers," Mr Bradlaugh stepped forward in an attempt to pacify them, but much to his surprise was himself seized by police. Fortunately, several of the bystanders volunteered to go to the police station with him, and he was immediately released.

Nowadays the Parks and the Commons are the happy hunting-grounds for the outdoor speaker, where he inculcates almost any doctrine he chooses, unmolested by the police or the public.

CHAPTER IV.

ARMY LIFE.

But all his debating and writing, all his studying, did not fill my father's pockets; they, like their owner, grew leaner every day. With his increasing poverty he fell into debt: it was not much that he owed, only £4 15s., but small as the sum was, it was more than he could repay, or see any definite prospect of repaying, unless he could strike out some new path. My grandfather, Mr Hooper, who knew him then, not personally, but by seeing and hearing him, used to call him "the young enthusiast," and many a time in later years recalled his figure as he appeared in the winter of 1850, in words that have brought tears to my eyes. Tall, gaunt, white-faced and hollow cheeked, with arms too long for his sleeves, and trousers too short for his legs, he looked, what indeed he was, nearly starving. "He looked *hungry*, Hypatia," my grandfather would say with an expressive shudder; "he looked hungry." And others have told me the same tale. How *could* his parents bear to know that he had come to such a pass!

A subscription was offered him by some Freethinking friends, and deeply grateful as he was, it yet brought his poverty more alarmingly before him. One night in December, one of the brothers Barralet met him looking as I have said, and invited him into a coffee house close by to discuss some scheme or other. They went in and chatted for some minutes, but when the waiter had brought the food, it seemed suddenly to strike the guest that the "scheme" was merely an excuse to give him a supper, and with one look at his companion, he jumped up and fled out of the room.

On Sunday, the 15th of December, he was lecturing in Bonner's Fields, and went home with the sons of Mr Samuel Record to dinner. They tell that while at dinner he threw his arms up above his head and asked Mr Record in a jesting tone, "How do

you think I should look in regimentals?" The elder man replied, "My boy, you are too noble for that." Unfortunately, a noble character could not clothe his long limbs, or fill his empty stomach, nor could it pay that terrible debt of £4 15s.

With "soldiering" vaguely in his mind, but yet without a clearly defined intention of enlisting, he went out two days afterwards, determined upon doing something to put an end to his present position. He walked towards Charing Cross, and there saw a poster inviting smart young men to join the East India Company's Service, and holding out to recruits the tempting bait of a bounty of £6 10s. This bounty was an overpowering inducement to the poor lad; his debts amounted to £4 15s.; this £6 10s. would enable him to pay all he owed and stand free once more. As Mr John M. Robertson justly says in his Memoir,* this incident was typical: "All through his life he had to shape his course to the paying off of his debts, toil as he would." Mr Headingley † tells that

"With a firm step, resolutely and soberly, Bradlaugh went down some steps to a bar where the recruiting sergeants were in the habit of congregating. Here he discerned the very fat, beery, but honest sergeant, who was then enlisting for the East India Service, and at once volunteered. Bradlaugh little imagined, when he stepped out of the cellar and crossed Trafalgar Square once more—this time with the fatal shilling in his pocket—that after all he would never go to the East Indies, but remain in England to gather around him vast multitudes of enthusiastic partisans, who, on that very spot, would insist on his taking his seat in Parliament, as the member for Northampton; and this, too, in spite of those heterodox views which, as yet, had debarred him from earning even the most modest livelihood.

"It happened, however, that the sergeant of the East India Company had 'borrowed a man' from the sergeant of the 50th Foot, and he determined honestly to pay back his debt with the person of Bradlaugh; so that after some hocus-pocus transactions between the two sergeants, Bradlaugh was surprised to find that he had been duly enrolled in the 50th Foot, and was destined for home service. Such a trick might have been played with impunity on some ignorant country yokel; but Bradlaugh at once rebelled, and made matters very uncomfortable for all persons concerned.

---

* Labour and Law, by Charles Bradlaugh. With Memoir by John M. Robertson.

† Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

"Among other persons to whom he explained all his grievances was the medical officer who examined him. This gentleman fortunately took considerable interest in the case, and had a long chat with Bradlaugh. He could not engage him for India, as he belonged to the home forces, but he invited him to look out of the window, where the sergeants were pacing about, and select the regiment he might prefer. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh was not particularly disappointed at being compelled to remain in England; he objected principally to the lack of respect implied in trifling with his professed intentions. He was, therefore, willing to accept the compromise suggested by the physician. So long as his right of choice was respected, it did not much matter to him in which regiment he served.

"After watching for a little while the soldiers pacing in front of the window, his choice fell on a very smart cavalry man, and, being of the necessary height, he determined to join his corps."

The regiment he elected to join proved to be the 7th (Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, and thus, through the kindly assistance of the doctor, at the age of "$17\frac{3}{12}$ years," he found himself a "full private" belonging to Her Majesty's forces.

After he enlisted he sent word, not to the father and mother who had treated him so coldly, but to the grandmother who loved him so dearly. She sent her daughter Mary to tell the parents of this new turn in their son's affairs, and the news seems to have been conveyed and received in a somewhat tragic manner. A day or so before Christmas Day she came with a face of gloomy solemnity to tell something so serious about Charles that the daughter Elizabeth, who happened to be there, was ordered out of the room. She remained weeping in the passage during the whole time of the family conclave, thinking that her brother must have done something very dreadful indeed.

Then the father went to see his son at Westminster, and obtained permission for the new recruit to spend the Christmas Day with his family. It is only natural to suppose that this semi-reconciliation must have afforded them all some sort of comfort, while I have a very strong personal conviction that the whole affair preyed upon the father's mind, and that the harshness he showed his son was really foreign to his general temper. Anyhow, his character underwent a great change after he let himself come under the influence of Mr Packer. He who before never went inside a church, now never missed a Sunday; he became concentrated and, to a certain extent, morose, and at length, on the 19th

August 1852, some twenty months after his son's enlistment, he was taken suddenly ill at his desk in Cloak Lane. He was brought home in a state of unconsciousness, from which he was only aroused to fall into violent delirium, and so continued without once recovering his senses until the hour of his death, which was reached on Tuesday the 24th. He was only forty-one years of age, and had always had good health previously, never ailing anything; and I feel quite convinced that the agony of mind which he must have endured from the time when his son was first denounced to him as an "Atheist" was mainly the cause of his early death.

The 7th Dragoon Guards was at that time quartered in Ireland, and Mr A. S. Headingley tells at length the tragic-comic adventures the new recruit met with at sea on the three days' journey from London to Dublin :—

"The recruits who were ordered to join their regiment were marched down to a ship lying in the Thames which was to sail all the way to Ireland. Bradlaugh was the only recruit who wore a black suit and a silk hat. The former was very threadbare, and the latter weak about the rim, but still to the other recruits he seemed absurdly attired ; and as he looked pale and thin and ill conditioned, it was not long before some one ventured to destroy the dignity of his appearance by bonneting him. The silk hat thus disposed of, much to the amusement of the recruits, who considered horse play the equivalent of wit, a raid was made upon Bradlaugh's baggage. His box was ruthlessly broken open, and when it was discovered that a Greek lexicon and an Arabic vocabulary were the principal objects he had thought fit to bring into the regiment, the scorn and derision of his fellow soldiers knew no bounds.

"A wild game of football was at once organized with the lexicon, and it came out of the scuffle torn and unmanageable. The Arabic vocabulary was a smaller volume, and it fared better. Ultimately, Bradlaugh recovered the book, and he keeps it still on his shelf, close to his desk, a cherished and useful relic of past struggles and endeavours.

. . . . . .

"His luggage broken open, his books scattered to the winds, his hat desecrated and ludicrously mis-shaped by the rough hands of his fellow recruits, Bradlaugh certainly did not present the picture of a future leader of men. Yet, even at this early stage of his military life, an opportunity soon occurred which turned the tables entirely in his favour.

"The weather had been looking ugly for some time, and now became more and more menacing, till at last a storm broke upon the ship with a violence so intense that the captain feared for her safety. It was

absolutely necessary to move the cargo, and his crew were not numerous enough to accomplish, unaided, so arduous a task. Their services also were urgently required to manœuvre the ship. The captain, therefore, summoned the recruits to help, and promised that if they removed the cargo as he indicated, he would give them £5 to share among themselves. He further encouraged them by expressing his hope that if the work were well and promptly done, the ship would pull through the storm.

"The proposition was greeted with cheers, and Bradlaugh, in spite of his sea-sickness, helped as far as he was able in moving the cargo. The ship now rode the waves more easily, and in due time the storm subsided; and, the danger over, the soldiers thought the hour of reckoning was at hand. The recruits began to inquire about the £5 which had been offered as the reward of their gallant services; but, with the disappearance of the danger, the captain's generosity had considerably subsided. He then hit on a mean stratagem to avoid the fulfilment of his promise. He singled out three or four of the leading men, the strongest recruits, and gave them two half-crowns each, calculating that if the strongest had a little more than their share, they would silence the clamours of the weaker, who were altogether deprived of their due.

"The captain had not, however, reckoned on the presence of Bradlaugh. The pale, awkward youth, who as yet had only been treated with jeers and contempt, was the only person who dared stand up and face him. To the unutterable surprise of every one, he delivered a fiery, menacing, unanswerable harangue, upbraiding the captain in no measured terms, exposing in lucid language the meanness of his action, and concluding with the appalling threat of a letter to the *Times*. To this day Bradlaugh remembers, with no small sense of self-satisfaction, the utter and speechless amazement of the captain at the sight of a person so miserable in appearance suddenly becoming so formidable in speech and menace.

"Awakened, therefore, to a consciousness of his own iniquity by Bradlaugh's eloquence, the captain distributed more money. The soldiers on their side at once formed a very different opinion of their companion, and, from being the butt, he became the hero of the troop. Every one was anxious to show him some sort of deference, and to make some acknowledgment for the services he had rendered."

While serving with his regiment Mr Bradlaugh was a most active advocate of temperance; he began, within a day or so of his arrival in Ireland, upon the quarter-master's daughters. He had been ordered to do some whitewashing for the quartermaster, and that officer's daughters saw him while he was at work, and took pity on him. I have told how he looked; and it is little

wonder that his appearance aroused compassion. They brought him a glass of port wine, but this my father majestically refused, and delivered to the amused girls a lecture upon the dangers of intemperance, emphasising his remarks by waves of the white-wash brush. He has often laughed at the queer figure he must have presented, tall and thin, with arms and legs protruding from his clothes, and raised up near to the ceiling on a board, above the two girls, who listened to the lecture, wineglass in hand. Later on, when he had gained a certain amount of popularity amongst his comrades, he used to be let out of the barrack-room windows when he could not get leave of absence, by means of blankets knotted together, in order to attend and speak at temperance meetings in Kildare. But the difficulty was not so much in getting out of barracks as in getting in again; and sometimes this last was not accomplished without paying the penalty of arrest. The men of his troop gave him the nickname of "Leaves," because of his predilection for tea and books; his soldier's knapsack contained a Greek lexicon, an Arabic vocabulary, and a Euclid, the beginnings of the library which at last numbered over 7000 volumes. Mr Bradlaugh remained a total abstainer for several years—until 1861. At that time he was in bad health, and was told by his physician that he was drinking too much tea; he drank tea in those days for breakfast, dinner, and tea, and whenever he felt thirsty in between. From that time until 1886 he took milk regularly for breakfast, and in 1886 he varied this regimen by adding a little coffee to his milk, with a little claret or hock for dinner or supper, and a cup of tea after dinner and at teatime. It has been said that he had a "passion for tea," but that is a mere absurdity. If he had been out, he would ask on coming in for a cup of tea, as another man would ask for a glass of beer or a brandy and soda, but he would take it as weak as you liked to give it him.

The stories of the energetic comment of the 300 dragoons upon the sermon of the Rev. Mr Halpin at Rathmines Church, and the assertion of a right of way by "Private Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.," have both been graphically told by Mr Headingley* and by Mrs Besant.†

---

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

† Review of Reviews, March 1891.

"On Sundays," relates Mr Headingley, "when it was fine, the regiment was marched to Rathmines Church, and here, on one occasion —it was Whit-Sunday—the Rev. Mr Halpin preached a sermon which he described as being beyond the understandings of the military portion of his congregation. This somewhat irritated the Dragoon Guards, and Bradlaugh, to their great delight, wrote a letter to the preacher, not only showing that he fully understood his sermon, but calling him to account for the inaccuracy of his facts and the illogical nature of his opinions.

"It was anticipated that an unpleasant answer might be made to this letter, and on the following Sunday the Dragoons determined to be fully prepared for the emergency. Accordingly, they listened carefully to the sermon. The Rev. Mr Halpin did not fail to allude to the letter he had received, but at the first sentence that was impertinent and contemptuous in its tone three hundred dragoons unhooked their swords as one man, and let the heavy weapons crash on the ground. Never had there been such a noise in a church, or a preacher so effectively silenced.

"An inquiry was immediately ordered to be held, Bradlaugh was summoned to appear, and serious consequences would have ensued; but, fortunately, the Duke of Cambridge came to Dublin on the next day, the review which was held in honour of his presence diverted attention, and so the matter dropped."

I give the right-of-way incident in Mrs Besant's words. While the regiment was at Ballincollig, she says—

"A curiously characteristic act made him the hero of the Inniscarra peasantry. A landowner had put up a gate across a right-of-way, closing it against soldiers and peasants, while letting the gentry pass through it. 'Leaves' looked up the question, and found the right-of-way was real; so he took with him some soldiers and some peasants, pulled down the gate, broke it up, and wrote on one of the bars, 'Pulled up by Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.' The landowner did not prosecute, and the gate did not reappear."

The landlord did not prosecute, because when he made his complaint to the officer commanding the regiment, the latter suggested that he should make quite certain that he had the law on his side, for Private Bradlaugh generally knew what he was about. The peasants, whose rights had been so boldly defended, did not confine their gratitude to words, but henceforth they kept their friend supplied with fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and such homely delicacies as they thought a private in a cavalry regiment would be likely to appreciate.

After speaking of the difficulties into which my father might have got over the Rathmines affair, Mrs Besant* tells of another occasion in which his position

"was even more critical. He was orderly room clerk, and a newly arrived young officer came into the room where he was sitting at work, and addressed to him some discourteous order. Private Bradlaugh took no notice. The order was repeated with an oath. Still no movement. Then it came again with some foul words added. The young soldier rose, drew himself to his full height, and, walking up to the officer, bade him leave the room, or he would throw him out. The officer went, but in a few minutes the grounding of muskets was heard outside, the door opened, and the Colonel walked in, accompanied by the officer. It was clear that the private soldier had committed an act for which he might be court-martialled, and as he said once, 'I felt myself in a tight place.' The officer made his accusation, and Private Bradlaugh was bidden to explain. He asked that the officer should state the exact words in which he had addressed him, and the officer who had, after all, a touch of honour in him, gave the offensive sentence word for word. Then Private Bradlaugh said, addressing his Colonel, that the officer's memory must surely be at fault in the whole matter, as he could not have used language so unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Colonel turned to the officer with the dry remark, 'I think Private Bradlaugh is right; there *must* be some mistake,' and he left the room."

Many are the stories that might be told of these his soldier's days. One incident that I have often heard him give, and which may well come in here, is referred to in Mr Robertson's interesting *Memoir* appended to my father's last book, "Labour and Law." This was an experience gained at Donnybrook Fair, the regiment being then quartered near "that historic village." "When Fair time came near the peasantry circulated a well-planned taunt to the effect that the men of the Seventh would be afraid to present themselves on the great day. The Seventh acted accordingly. Sixteen picked men got a day's leave—and shillelaghs. 'I was the shortest of the sixteen,'" said Mr Bradlaugh, as he related the episode, not without some humorous qualms, and *he* stood 6 feet 1½ inches. "The sixteen just 'fought through,' and their arms and legs were black for many weeks,

* See Character Sketch *Charles Bradlaugh.*—Review of Reviews, March 1891.

though their heads, light as they clearly were, did not suffer seriously. But," he added, with a sigh, as he finished the story, "I *couldn't* do it now."

A further experience of a really tragic and terrible kind I will relate in my father's own words, for in these he most movingly describes a scene he himself witnessed, and a drama in which he took an unwilling part.

"Those of you who are Irishmen," he begins,* "will want no description of that beautiful valley of the Lee which winds between the hills from Cork, and in summer seems like a very Paradise, green grass growing to the water side, and burnished with gold in the morning, and ruddy to very crimson in the evening sunset. I went there on a November day. I was one of a troop to protect the law officers, who had come with the agent from Dublin to make an eviction a few miles from Inniscarra, where the river Bride joins the Lee. It was a miserable day—rain freezing into sleet as it fell—and the men beat down wretched dwelling after wretched dwelling, some thirty or forty perhaps. They did not take much beating down; there was no flooring to take up; the walls were more mud than aught else; and there was but little trouble in the levelling of them to the ground. We had got our work about three parts done, when out of one of them a woman ran, and flung herself on the ground, wet as it was, before the Captain of the troop, and she asked that her house might be spared—not for long, but for a little while. She said her husband had been born in it; he was ill of the fever, but could not live long, and she asked that he might be permitted to die in it in peace. Our Captain had no power; the law agent from Dublin wanted to get back to Dublin; his time was of importance, and he would not wait; and that man was carried out while we were there—in front of us, while the sleet was coming down—carried out on a wretched thing (you could not call it a bed), and he died there while we were there; and three nights afterwards, while I was sentry on the front gate at Ballincollig Barracks, we heard a cry, and when the guard was turned out, we found this

* *National Reformer*, November 16, 1873. A speech on the Irish Question delivered in New York; reprinted from the *New York Tribune* of October 7th.

poor woman there a raving maniac, with one dead babe in one arm, and another in the other clinging to the cold nipple of her lifeless breast. And," asked my father, in righteous indignation, "if you had been brothers to such a woman, sons of such a woman, fathers of such a woman, would not rebellion have seemed the holiest gospel you could hear preached?"

CHAPTER V.

ARMY LIFE CONCLUDED.

When his father died in 1852 Private Charles Bradlaugh came home on furlough to attend the funeral. He was by this time heartily sick of soldiering, and under the circumstances was specially anxious to get home to help in the support of his family. (This, one writer, without the slightest endeavour to be accurate even on the simplest matters, says is nonsense, because his family only numbered *two*, his mother and his brother!) His great-aunt, Elizabeth Trimby, promised to buy him out, and he went back to his regiment buoyed up by her promise. In September he was in hospital, ill with rheumatic fever, and after that he seems to have had more or less rheumatism during the remainder of his stay in Ireland; for in June 1853, in writing to his sister, apologising for having passed over her birthday without a letter, he says: "I was, unfortunately, on my bed from another attack of the rheumatism, which seized my right knee in a manner anything but pleasant, but it is a mere nothing to the dose I had last September, and I am now about again."

The letters I have by me of my father's, written home at this time, instead of teeming with fiery fury and magniloquent phrases as to shooting his officers,* are just a lad's letters; the sentences

* Whether rightly or wrongly, my father thought he was treated with exceptional severity by his Captain during the first part of the time he was in the army; and this has been exaggerated into a story of how in his letters to his mother during the latter part of his army life he was "*constantly* informing her" that "unless she obtained his discharge he would put a bullet through this officer." The story, I need hardly say, is quite untrue, and to any one who knew my father must seem almost too absurd to need refutation. During Mr Bradlaugh's illness in 1889 Captain Walker, then General Sir Beauchamp Walker, called twice to inquire at Circus Road. My father was very dull and depressed one day as he lay in bed, and, thinking to cheer him,

for the most part a little formal and empty, with perhaps the most interesting item reserved for the postscript; now and again crude verses addressed to his sister, and winding up almost invariably with "write soon." After the father's death Mr Lepard, a member of the firm in which he had been confidential clerk for upwards of twenty-one years, used his influence to get the two youngest children, Robert and Harriet, into Orphan Asylums. While the matter was yet in abeyance Elizabeth seems to have written her brother asking if any of the officers could do anything to help in the matter, and on March 14th he answers her from Ballincollig:—

"I am very sorry to say that you have a great deal more to learn of the world yet, my dear Elizabeth, or you would not expect to find an officer of the army a subscriber to an Orphan Asylum. There may be a few, but the most part of them spend all the money they have in hunting, racing, boating, horses, dogs, gambling, and drinking, besides other follies of a graver kind, and have little to give to the poor, and less inclination to give it even than their means."

My father's great-aunt, Miss Elizabeth Trimby, died in June 1853, at the age of eighty-five. She died without having fulfilled her promise of buying her nephew's discharge; but as the little money she left, some £70, came to the Bradlaugh family, they had now the opportunity of themselves carrying out her intention, or, to be exact, her precise written wishes.*

The mother, in her heart, wanted her son home: she needed the comfort of his presence, and the help of his labour, to add to their scanty women's earnings; but she was a woman slow to forgive, and her son had set his parents' commands at defiance, and gone out into the world alone, rather than bow his neck to the yoke his elders wished to put upon him. She talked the matter over with her neighbours, and if it was a kindly, easy-going neighbour, who said, "Oh, I should have him home," then she

---

I mentioned the names of persons who I knew he would like to hear had inquired; and when I read the name from the card, and said that General Walker had told the maid to "tell Mr Bradlaugh that his old Captain had called," he was delighted beyond measure, and was for the moment the boy private again, with the private's feelings for his superior officer. The visit gratified him almost as much as if it had been one from Mr Gladstone himself.

* *National Reformer*, Feb. 10, 1884.

allowed her real desires to warm her heart a little, and think that perhaps she would; if, on the other hand, her neighbour dilated upon the wickedness of her son, and the enormity of his offences, then she would harden herself against him. Her daughter Elizabeth wanted him home badly; and whilst her mother was away at Mitcham, attending the funeral, and doing other things in connection with the death of Miss Trimby, Elizabeth wrote to her brother, asking what it would cost to buy him out. He was instructed to write on a separate paper, as she was afraid of her mother's anger when she saw it, and wished to take the favourable opportunity of a soft moment to tell her. She was left in charge at home, and thinking her mother safe at Mitcham for a week, she had timed the answer to come in her absence. One day she had to leave the house to take home some work which she had been doing. On her return, much to her dismay, her mother met her at the door perfectly furious. The letter had come during the girl's short absence, and her mother had come home unexpectedly! "How dared she write her brother? How dared she ask such a question?" the mother demanded, and poor Elizabeth was in sad disgrace all that day, and for some time afterwards. This was the answer her brother sent, on June 22nd, from Cahir—

"As you wish, I send on this sheet what it would cost to buy me off; but I would not wish to rob you and mother like that.

For the Discharge	£30 0 0
Compensation for general clothing . .	0 17 6
Passage money home	1 16 0
	£32 13 6

or about £33.

"I could come home in regimentals, because clothes could be bought cheaper in London, and I would work like a slave; but do not think, my dear sister, I want to take the money from you and mother, though I would do anything to get from the army.

"We are under orders to march into the county of Clare to put down the rioters at Six Mile Bridge, in the coming election, and expect some fighting there."

The discharge was applied for in August, but I gather that Mr Lepard, who assisted my grandmother in the little legal matters arising out of Miss Trimby's death, was not very favourable to the

project, and seems to have required some guarantee as to my father's character,* before he would remit the money.

However, it was at length definitely arranged that the aunt's promise should be kept, and that her money should purchase the discharge according to her intentions. A thoroughly boyish letter gives expression to Private Bradlaugh's sentiments on hearing the good news. It is dated from "Cahir, 6th October 1853:—

"My Dear Mother,—When I opened your letter, before reading it I waved it three times round my head, and gave a loud 'hurra' from pure joy, for then I felt assured that all this was not a mere dream, but something very like reality. The £30 has not yet made its appearance on the scene. I shall be glad to see it, as I shall not feel settled till I get away. I am, however, rather damped to hear of your ill-health, but hope for something better. I have made inquiries about butter, but it is extremely dear, 1s. to 14d. per lb. in this county.

"When the £30 arrives I will write to let you know the day I shall be home. Till then, believe me, my dearest mother, your affectionate Son, Charles Bradlaugh.

"Love to Elizabeth, Robert, and Harriet."

He did not have to wait long for the appearance of the £30 "on the scene," which speedily resulted in the following "parchment certificate:"—

"7th (Princess Royal's) Regiment of Dragoon Guards.

"These are to certify that Charles Bradlaugh, Private, born in the Parish of Hoxton, in or near the Town of London, in the County of

---

* Amongst some letters my father gave me some long time ago is one which must have satisfied even Mr Lepard. It is as follows:—

"Cahir Barracks, September 23rd, 1853.

"Sir,—Having been informed by Private Charles Bradlaugh of the 7th Dragoon Guards, that you require some testimonials as to character, I beg to inform you that during the time this man has been in the regiment (since December 1850) his conduct has been extremely good, and I beg also to add that he is always considered to be a clever, well-informed, and steady young man. Should you require any further information, I shall be most happy to give [all] in my power.—I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

"E. T. Dowbiggin,

"J. Lepard, Esq. Lieut. and Adjutant, 7th Dragoon Guards.

"*P.S.*—I may observe that during the last eighteen months this man has been occupying rather a prominent situation in the regiment, being that of orderly room clerk, and has consequently been immediately under my notice."

Middlesex, was enlisted at Westminster for the 7th Dragoon Guards, on the 17th December 1850, at the age of $17\frac{3}{12}$ years. That he served in the Army for two years and 301 days. That he is discharged in consequence of his requesting the same, on payment of £30.

"C. F. AINSLIE, Hd. Commanding Officer.

"Dated at Cahir, 12th October 1853.

"Adjutant General's Office, Dublin.

"Discharge of Private Charles Bradlaugh confirmed.

"14th October 1853. J. EDEN,* 7th D. G.

"Character: Very Good.

"C. F. AINSLIE, 7th D. Guards."

The merely formal part of the discharge is made out in his own handwriting as orderly room clerk.

These three years of army life were of great value to my father. First of all physically: for a little time before he enlisted he had been half starved, and his health was being undermined by constant privation just at a time when his great and growing frame most needed nourishing. In the army he had food, which although it might be of a kind to be flouted by an epicure, was sufficiently abundant, and came at regular intervals. The obnoxious drill which he had to go through must have helped to broaden his chest (at his death he was forty-six-and-a-half inches round the chest) and harden his muscles, and so gave him the strength which served him so well in the later years of his life. He learned to fence and to ride, and both accomplishments proved useful in latter days. Fencing was always a favourite exercise with him, and, in after days, when alone, he would also often exercise his muscles by going through a sort of sword drill with the old cavalry sabre, which is hanging on my wall to-day. Riding he at first abhorred, and probably any London East End lad would share his sentiments when first set upon a cavalry charger with a hard mouth; he was compelled to ride until the blood ran down his legs, and before these wounds had time to heal he had to be on horseback again. When he was orderly room clerk, and was not compelled to ride so often, then he took a liking for it, and then he really learned to sit and manage his horse. Often and often during the last years of his life he longed to be rich enough to keep a horse, so that he might ride to the House and wherever his

* This signature is almost illegible.

business might take him within easy distance, and thus get the exercise of which he stood so urgently in need.

It was, too, while with his regiment in Ireland that Mr Bradlaugh first became acquainted with James Thomson, an acquaintance which soon ripened into a friendship which lasted for five-and-twenty years. In the quiet nights, whilst the private was on sentry duty, he and the young schoolmaster would have long serious talks upon subjects a little unusual, perhaps, amongst the rank and file ; or in the evening, when Thomson's work was done, and Private Bradlaugh could get leave, they would go for a ramble together. They each became the confidant of the other's troubles and aspirations, and each was sure of a sympathetic listener.

That his regiment happened to be stationed in Ireland during the whole time he belonged to it was of immense importance to him. He learned the character and the needs of the Irish peasantry as he could have learned it in no other way. The sights he saw and the things he heard whilst he was in Ireland, as the story I cited a few pages back will show, produced in him such a profound feeling of tenderness and sympathy for the Irish people, that not all the personal enmity which was afterwards shown him by Irishmen could destroy or even weaken.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE.

BARELY three short years away, yet how many changes in that short time. My father found, father, aunt, and grandmother dead; his little sister and brother—of five and eight years—in Orphan Asylums. Even his kind friend Mrs Carlile was dead, and her children scattered, gone to the other side of the Atlantic, to be lost sight of by him for many years. Of their fate he learned later that the two daughters were married, while Julian, his one time companion, was killed in the American War.

On his return my father's first endeavour was, of course, to seek for work, so that he might help to maintain his mother and sisters; but although he sought energetically, and at first had much faith in the charm of his "very good" character, no one seemed to want the tall trooper. After a little his mother, unhappily, began to taunt him with the legacy money having been used to buy his discharge; and although he thought, and always maintained, that the money was morally his, to be used for that purpose, since it was carrying out the intentions of his aunt expressed so short a time before her death, he nevertheless determined to, and in time did, pay every farthing back again to his mother, through whose hands the money had come to him. He was offered the post of timekeeper with a builder at Fulham, at a salary of 20s. a week; this Mrs Bradlaugh objected to, as taking him too far away from home.

One day he went, amongst other places, into the office of Mr Rogers, a solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, to inquire whether he wanted a clerk. Mr Rogers had no vacancy for a clerk, but mentioned casually that he wanted a lad for errands and office work. My father asked, "What wages?" "Ten shillings a week," replied Mr Rogers. "Then I'll take it," quickly decided my father, feeling rather in despair as to getting anything better, but bravely resolved to get something. Not that he was in reality very

long without work, for his discharge from the army was dated at Dublin, October 14th, 1853, and I have a letter written from "70 Fenchurch Street" on January 2nd, 1854, so that he could not have been idle for more than about two months at the most. There is no reference whatever in the letter to the newness of his situation, so that he had probably been with Mr Rogers some weeks prior to the 2nd January 1854. The solicitor soon found out that his "errand boy" had considerable legal knowledge and, what was even more important, a marvellous quickness in appre hension of legal points. At the end of each three months his salary was increased by five shillings, and after nine months he had intrusted to him the whole of the Common Law department. Very soon he was able to add a little to his income by acting as secretary to a Building Society at the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

As soon as my father found himself in regular employment he began to write and speak again; but even as the busy-bodies turned the kind-hearted baker's wife against him a few years before, so now again they tried to ruin his career with Mr Rogers. Anonymous and malicious letters were sent, but they did not find in him a weak though good-hearted creature, with a fearful apprehension that the smell usually associated with brimstone would permeate the legal documents; on the contrary, he was a shrewd man who knew the value of his clerk, and treated the anonymous letters with contempt, only asking of my father that he should "not let his propaganda become an injury to his business."

Thus it was he took the name of "Iconoclast," under the thin veil of which he did all his anti-theological work until he became candidate for Parliament in 1868; thenceforward he always spoke and wrote under his own name, whatever the subject he was dealing with. Any appearance of concealment or secrecy was dreadfully irksome to him, though in 1854 he had very little choice.

About Christmas 1853 my father made the acquaintance of a family named Hooper, all of whom were Radicals and Freethinkers except Mrs Hooper, who would have preferred to have belonged to Church people because they were so much more thought of. She had great regard for her neighbours' opinion, and for that reason objected to chess and cards on Sunday. Abraham Hooper,

her husband, must on such points as these have been a constant thorn in the dear old lady's side: he was an ardent Freethinker and Radical, a teetotaller, and a non-smoker. All his opinions he held aggressively; and no matter where was the place or who was the person, he rarely failed to make an opportunity to state his opinions. He was very honest and upright, a man whose word was literally his bond. He had often heard my father speak in Bonner's Fields, and had named him "the young enthusiast." He himself from his boyhood onward was always in the thick of popular movements; although a sturdy Republican, he was one of the crowd who cheered Queen Caroline; he was present at all the Chartist meetings at London; and he was a great admirer of William Lovett. On more than one occasion he was charged by the police whilst taking part in processions. He once unwittingly became mixed up with a secret society, but he speedily disentangled himself—there was nothing of the secret conspirator about him.

He was what might be called "a stiff customer," over six feet in height, and broad in proportion; and he would call his spade a spade. If you did not like it—well, it was so much the worse for you, if you could not give a plain straightforward reason why it should be called "a garden implement." "Verbosity" was lost upon him; he passed it over unnoticed, and came back to his facts as though you had not spoken. In his early old age he had rather a fine appearance, and I have several times been asked at meetings which he has attended with us, who is that "grand-looking old man." Although in politics and religion he was all on the side of liberty, in his own domestic circle he was a tyrant and a despot, exacting the most rigorous and minute obedience to his will.

His passionate affection for my father was a most beautiful thing to see. He had heard him speak, as a lad, many a time in Bonner's Fields, and from 1854 had him always under his eye. "The young enthusiast" became "my boy Charles," the pride and the joy of his life; and he loved him with a love which did but grow with his years. My father's friends were his friends, my father's enemies were his enemies; and although "Charles" might forgive a friend who had betrayed him and take him back to friendship again, *he* never did, and was always prepared for the next betrayal—which, alas! too often came. He outlived my

father by only five months: until a few years before his death he had never ailed anything, and did not know what headache or toothache meant; but when his "boy" was gone life had no further interest for him, and he willingly welcomed death.

And it was the eldest daughter of this single-hearted, if somewhat rigorous man, Susannah Lamb Hooper, whom my father loved and wedded. I knew that my mother had kept and cherished most of the letters written her by my father during their courtship, but I never opened the packet until I began this biography. These letters turn out to be more valuable than I had expected, for they entirely dispose of some few amongst the many fictions which have been more or less current concerning Mr Bradlaugh.

At the first glance one is struck with the quantity of verse amongst the letters. I say struck, because nearly, if not quite, all his critics, friendly and hostile, have asserted that Mr Bradlaugh was entirely devoid of poetic feeling or love of verse. With the unfriendly critics this assumed lack seems to indicate something very bad: a downright vice would be more tolerable in their eyes; and even the friendly critics appear to look upon it as a flaw in his character. I am, however, bound to confirm the assumption in so far as that, during later years at least, he looked for something more than music in verse; and mere words, however beautifully strung together, had little charm for him. His earliest favourites amongst poets seem to have been Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law rhymer, and, of course, Shelley. As late as 1870 he was lecturing upon Burns and Byron; later still he read Whittier with delight; and I have known him listen with great enjoyment to Marlowe, Spenser, Sydney, and others, although, curiously enough, for Swinburne he had almost an active distaste, caring neither to read his verse nor to hear it read. It is something to remember that it was my father, and he alone, who threw open his pages to James Thomson ("B. V.") at a time when he was ignored and unrecognised and could nowhere find a publisher to recognise the fire and genius of his grand and gloomy verse.

But to return to his own verses: he began early, and his Bonner's Fields speeches in 1849 and 1850 more often than not wound up with a peroration in rhyme; in verse, such as it was, he would sing the praises of Kossuth, Mazzini, Carlile, or whatever hero was the subject of his discourse. His verses to my mother

were written before and after marriage: the last I have is dated 1860. I am not going to quote any of these compositions, for my father died in the happy belief that all save two or three had perished; but there is one that he sent my mother which will, I think, bear quoting, and has an interest for its author's sake. Writing in July 1854, he says: "I trust you will excuse my boldness in forwarding the enclosed, but think you will like its pretty style. I begged it from my only literary acquaintance, a young schoolmaster, so can take no credit to myself"—

"Breathe onward, soft breeze, odour laden,
And gather new sweets on your way,
For a happy and lovely young maiden
Will inhale thy rich perfume this day.
And tell her, oh! breeze softly sighing,
When round her your soft pinions wreathe,
That my love-stricken soul with thee vieing
All its treasures to her would outbreathe.

"Flow onward, ye pure sparkling waters
In sunshine with ripple and spray,
For the fairest of earth's young daughters
Will be imaged within you this day.
And tell her, oh! murmuring river,
When past her your bright billows roll,
That thus, too, her fairest form ever
Is imaged with truth in my soul."

The "young schoolmaster" was, of course, James Thomson; and these verses express the thought which occurs again so delightfully in No. XII. of the "Sunday up the River."*

Another current fiction concerning my father is that he was coarse, rude, and ill-mannered in his young days. Now, to take one thing alone as a text: Can I believe that the love letters now before me that he wrote to my dear mother could have been penned by one of coarse speech and unrefined thought? The tender and respectful courtesy of some of them carries one back to a century or so ago, when a true lover was most choice in the expressions he used to his mistress. No! No one with a trace of coarseness in his nature could have written these letters.

* The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems. By James Thomson ("B.V.").

Another and equally unfounded calumny, which has been most industriously circulated, concerns my father's own pecuniary position and his alleged neglect of his mother. I am able to quote passages from this correspondence which make very clear statements on these points; and the silent testimony of these letters, written in confidence to his future wife, is quite incontrovertible. In a letter written on the 17th November 1854, he says:—

"My present income at the office is £65, and at the Building Society £35, making about £100 a year, but I have not yet enjoyed this long enough to feel the full benefit of it. I am confident, if nothing fresh arises, of an increase at Christmas, but am also trying for a situation which if I can get would bring me in £150 per annum and upwards. Your father did not tell me when I saw him that I was extravagant, but he said that he thought I was not 'a very saving character,' so that you see, according to good authority, we are somewhat alike. . . . I do not blame you for expecting to hear from me, but I was, as the Americans say, in a fix. I did not like to write, lest your father might think I was virtually taking advantage of a consent not yet given.

"You will, of course, understand from my not being a very careful young man why I am not in a position of healthy pockets, purse plethora, plenum in the money-box, so necessary to one who wishes to entangle himself in the almost impenetrable mysteries of 'housekeeping.'

"I don't know whether you were ever sufficiently charmed with the subject to make any calculations on the £ s. d. questions of upholstery, etc. I have, and after knocking my head violently against gigantic 'four posters,' and tumbling over 'neat fender and fire-irons,' I have been most profoundly impressed with respect and admiration for every one who could coolly talk upon so awful a subject."

From the foregoing letter it would appear that Mr Hooper would not give a definite consent to the marriage; and a little later my father writes that he had again asked for the paternal approval, and draws a picture of "C. B." kneeling to the "krewel father." The consent asked for was apparently given this time, and plans and preparations for the marriage were made. On 20th March 1855 my father writes:—

"I also thought that it seemed a rather roundabout way of arriving at a good end, that I should take upon myself the bother of lodgers in one house, while mother at home intended to let the two upstairs

rooms to some one else. I also thought that supposing anything were to happen either to separate me from the Building Society or to stop its progress, I might be much embarrassed in a pecuniary point of view with the burden of two rents attached to me. It therefore struck me, and I suggested to mother and Lizzie, whether it would not be possible, and not only possible but preferable, that we should all live in the same house as separate and distinct as though we were strangers in one sense, and yet not so in another. Mother and Lizzie both fully agreed with me, but it is a question, my dearest Susan, which entirely rests with you, and you alone must decide the question. I have agreed to allow mother 10s. per week, and if we lived elsewhere, mother out of it would have to pay rent, whilst ours would be in no way reduced. Again, if you felt dull there would be company for you, and I might feel some degree of hesitation in leaving you to find companionship in persons utterly strangers to both of us. There are doubtless evils connected with my proposal, but I think they are preventible ones. Mother might wish to interfere with your mode of arrangements. This she has promised in no way whatever to do. I leave the matter to yourself—on the ground of economy much might be said—at any rate my own idea is that we could not hurt by trying the experiment for a time ; but do not let my ideas influence you in your decision : I will be governed by you : believe me, I only wish and endeavour to form a plan by which we may live happy and comfortably."

In April we have the first recorded lawsuit in which Mr Bradlaugh took part as one of the principals, though earlier than this, soon after quitting the army, he had shown much legal acumen and practical wisdom in a case that I cannot do better than quote here in his own words :—

"While I was away," he says, "a number of poor men had subscribed their funds together, and had erected a Working Man's Hall, in Goldsmith's Row, Hackney Road. Not having any legal advice, it turned out that they had been entrapped into erecting their building on freehold ground without any lease or conveyance from the freeholder, who asserted his legal right to the building. The men consulted me, and finding that under the Statute of Frauds they had no remedy, I recommended them to offer a penalty rent of £20 a year. This being refused, I constituted myself into a law court ; and without any riot or breach of the peace, I with the assistance of a hundred stout men took every brick of the building bodily away, and divided the materials, so far as was possible, amongst the proper owners. I think I can see now the disappointed rascal of a freeholder when he only had his bare soil left once

more. He did not escape unpunished; for, to encourage the others to contribute, he had invested some few pounds in the building. He had been too clever: he had relied on the letter of the law, and I beat him with a version of common-sense justice."

To return to my father's first suit in law. He brought an action for false imprisonment against a solicitor named Wyatt. It appeared that a person named Clements had assigned a wharf and certain book debts and books to Messrs. Carr, Lamb & Co., and Mr Rogers, their solicitor, sent Mr Bradlaugh, then his clerk, to Mr Wyatt's office, Gray's Inn, to fetch away the books. Mr Wyatt refused to give them up: Mr Bradlaugh seized them and carried them (an immense pile) to a cab he had waiting. Mr Wyatt appeared on the scene with a clerk, and endeavoured to regain possession of the books. After much resistance, in which my father's coat was torn and hands cut, Mr Wyatt, unable to get the books, called a policeman, and gave his adversary into custody on a charge of "stealing the books;" this he withdrew for another—"creating a disturbance and carrying off books." My father was locked up (whether for minutes or hours I know not) with a boy who had been apprehended whilst picking pockets. When he was brought before the magistrate he was discharged, because no one appeared to prosecute. He wrote a number of letters to Mr Wyatt demanding an apology, but received no answer, and at length brought an action against him for false imprisonment. The case came on before Mr Justice Crompton, and much to his delight, he won a verdict, with £30 damages.

The foregoing is, I think, the only case in Mr Bradlaugh's career in which he kept damages awarded him for his own personal use. In every other case the damages were given to some charity—in later years, always to the Masonic Boys' School. This time however the damages awarded him by the jury were used in a purely personal manner, for the money enabled him to hasten his marriage, and on June 5th, 1855, he and my mother were married at St. Philip's Church, in the Parish of Stepney, he barely 22 years of age, and she two years his senior.

They went to live at Warner Place, as was suggested in a letter I have quoted; and my mother, who had been in very poor health for some time previous to her marriage, seems to have gone with her sister-in-law to Reigate for a few days at the end of the following July. How very straitened their circumstances were,

the following extract from a letter of my father's to his wife will show:—

"Carr and Lamb have not settled with me, and I am much pinched for cash, in fact, so much so that, as mother seems to wish to come to Reigate, I have thought of letting her come on Sunday, and staying at home myself, as I cannot manage both. If you feel well enough, I would like you to come home about next Thursday or Friday, as I begin to feel rather topsy-turvy . . . . If I do not come, I will send you money to clear you through the week. Do not think me in the least degree unkind if I stay away, because I assure you it is a great source of discomfort to me; but the fact is, if you want to spend thirty shillings, and have only twenty, there arises a most unaccountable difficulty in getting your purse and programme to agree. Had Carr and L., as I anticipated, closed accounts with me on Monday, all would have gone on smoothly, but as it is I am cramped. I have also been disappointed in the receipt of two or three other small sums which, coupled with an increased expenditure, all help to draw me up short."

The newly-married couple did not stop very long at Warner Place. Mrs Bradlaugh senior and her daughter-in-law did not get on comfortably together, and so husband and wife removed to 4 West Street, Bethnal Green, where their first child, my sister Alice, was born on April 30, 1856. At the outset my parents were devotedly attached to one another, an attachment which was not in the least degree diminished on my mother's part until the hour of her death; and had they remained pinched by the same close grip of poverty as at first their union might have remained unbroken; who can say? My father was essentially a "home" man, and when not called away on business preferred his own fireside to that of any other man. People have taken it upon themselves to describe my mother's personal appearance, some by one adjective and some by another; but to my eyes, at least, she was comely to look upon. She was a brunette, with hair which was black and silky, and the finest I ever saw; she was nearly as tall as my father, and carried herself well, although in her later years she was much too stout. She was good-natured to a fault, generous to lavishness, and had an open ear and an open pocket for every tale of sorrow or distress. During my recollection our home was never without one or more needy visitors: my father's brother and youngest sister, her own brother and sister, Mr James Thomson, and others too numerous to mention, all partook of the open-hearted hospitality which was lavished upon them. She shone at

her best in entertaining my father's political friends, and her good-natured amiability made her a general favourite. She was passionately attached to her children, and was rewarded by her children's devotion, which endured through fair weather and foul; as, indeed, was only her just due, for in all points save one she was the best of mothers.

And it was this one point which, overbalancing all the rest, ruined our home, lost her my father's love and her friends' respect, and was the cause of her own sufferings, unhappiness, and early death. As soon as fortune and success began to shine ever so feebly on my father's labours, there did not lack the usual flatterers to his wife, and panderers to her unhappy weakness. In a terribly short time, by the aid of thoughtless, good-natured evil-doers and intentional malice, this weakness developed into absolute and confirmed intemperance, which it seemed as though nothing could check. With intemperance came the long train of grievous consequences; easy good nature became extravagant folly, and was soon followed by the alienation of real friends and a ruined home. My father was gentleness and forbearance itself, but his life was bitterly poisoned; he had his wife treated medically, and sent to a hydropathic establishment, but all to no purpose. When our home was finally broken up in 1870, and the closest retrenchment was necessary, my father decided that it was utterly impossible to do that with dignity as long as my mother remained in London; so she and we two girls—my brother was at school—went to board with my grandfather at Midhurst, Sussex. It was intended as a merely temporary arrangement, and had it proved beneficial to my mother we should, when better times came, have had a reunited home; but, alas! it was not to be. At first my father came fairly frequently to Midhurst, but there was no improvement, and so his visits became fewer and fewer; they brought him no pleasure, but merely renewed the acuteness of his suffering. At length he, always thoughtful for those about him, and recognising the terrible strain upon us his daughters in the life we were then leading, arranged for us each to spend a month alternately with him at his London lodgings, but not continuously, as he was anxious not to separate us. Sometimes it was contrived for us both to be in London together, and these were indeed sunshiny days. We wrote letters for him, and did what we could, and he made us happy by persuading us that we were his secretaries

and really useful to him; we tried to be, but I fear our desires and his loving acceptance of our work went far beyond its real merits. With time my mother became a confirmed invalid, and in May 1877 she died very unexpectedly from heart disease engendered by alcoholism.

Malevolent people have made a jest of all this, but the tragedy was ours; others even more malevolent have endeavoured to make my father in some way blameworthy in the matter—they might just as well blame me! Any one who knows the story in all its details, with its years of silent martyrdom for him, will know that my father's behaviour was that of one man in a thousand. Some also have said that my mother was in an asylum. Perhaps the following quotation from a letter written by her from Midhurst, a few days before her death, to us who were in London getting my father's things straight in his new lodgings, will be the best answer, and will also show a little the kind of woman she was: —

"My chest is so bad. I really feel ill altogether; if either of you were with me, you could not do me any good. I shall be glad of a letter to know how Hypatia gets on.

"Do not neglect writing me, my darlings, for my heart is very sad. With great love to dear Papa, and also to your own dear selves.—Always believe me, your faithful mother, S. L. Bradlaugh."

I have in this chapter said all I intend to say as to the relations between my father and my mother. I shall perhaps be pardoned —in my capacity as daughter, if not in that of biographer—for leaving the matter here, and not going into it more fully. It is a painful subject for one who loved her parents equally, and would fain have been equally proud of both. Honestly speaking, I think I should never have had the courage to touch upon it at all had I not felt that my duty to my father absolutely required it. He allowed himself to be maligned and slandered publicly and privately on the subject of his alleged separation from his wife, but he never once took up the pen to defend himself. Hence it becomes my unhappy duty to give the world for the first time some real idea of the truth.

CHAPTER VII.

HYDE PARK MEETINGS, 1855.

In the summer of 1855, Mr Bradlaugh for the first time took part in a great Hyde Park meeting. He went, like so many others, merely as a spectator, having no idea that the part he would be called upon to play would lead him into a position of prominence. In order to get a little into the spirit of that Hyde Park meeting, I must recall a few of the events which led up to it.

A Bill had been introduced into the House of Commons by Lord Robert Grosvenor which was called the New Sunday Bill or the Sunday Trading Bill, and had for its object the prevention of the whole of that small trading by poor vendors, with which we are familiar in certain parts of the metropolis to-day. Who has not seen or heard of the Sunday marketing in Petticoat Lane, Leather Lane, Golden Lane, Whitecross Street, and many such another place? This small trading is very useful, and in many cases absolutely necessary to the very poor, who, being at work all the week, would not otherwise have time for the purchase of the Sunday dinner—the one real dinner of the week—shoes, or such other articles of clothing as decency compels them to have even when their slender purses almost forbid the purchase. Lord Robert Grosvenor's Bill fell amongst these like a bombshell, causing the wildest excitement and indignation.*

* The following handbill, which was circulated after the second reading of the Sunday Trading Bill, and put in evidence at the Royal Commission subsequently held, will give a good idea as to the extent of the proposed measure.

"Tyrannical attack upon the Liberty of the people. Proposed prohibition of Sunday trading. The New Bill brought in by Lord Robert Grosvenor, Lord Ebrington, and Mr M. Chambers proposes to prevent trading on Sundays within the Metropolitan Police District and city of London, and the liberties thereof. It enacts 'that all persons selling, offering, or exposing for sale, or causing to be sold or exposed for sale (on Sundays) any goods, chattels, effects, or things whatsoever, shall, on summary conviction thereof, be fined 5s., and on a second conviction, this fine may be increased to 40s.; and the fines will

Then it was that the excitement of the people needed to find some expression in action, and J. B. Leno, the working man poet, and others, turned the popular feeling to account by directing it into the form of an unmistakable protest against this class of legislation. Amongst the handbills put in circulation was the following, calling a meeting for June 24th :—

"New Sunday Bill to put down newspapers, shaving, smoking, eating and drinking of all kinds of food, or recreation for body or mind at present enjoyed by poor people. An open-air meeting of the artizans, mechanics, and lower orders of the metropolis will be held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon next, to see how religiously the aristocracy observe the Sabbath, and how careful they are not to work their servants or their cattle on that day (*vide* Lord Robert Grosvenor's speech). The meeting is summoned for three o'clockon the right bank of the Serpentine, looking towards Kensington Gardens. Come and bring your wives and families with you, that they may benefit by the example set them by their betters.—*A Ratepayer of Walworth.*"

The outcome of all this was that large numbers of people found their way into Hyde Park on Sunday, June 24th. They came

be cumulative, and every separate act of selling will be a separate offence. The act will not apply to the sale of medicines or drugs, nor to the selling or crying of milk or cream before 9 a.m. or after 1 p.m., nor to the selling or offering of any newspaper or periodical before 10 a.m., nor to the sale of fruit, cooked victuals, or any unfermented beverage before 10 a.m. and after 1 p.m., nor to the sale of meat, poultry, fish, or game, before 9 a.m., from the 31st of May to the 1st of October in each year, nor to the exercise of the ordinary business of a licensed victualler or innkeeper. Butchers and others delivering meat, fish, or game, after 9 a.m. on Sundays, will be liable to the penalties above mentioned. Nor will that useful class of the community, the barbers and hairdressers, be exempted, if they presume to 'do business' after ten o'clock on Sunday mornings, in which case they may be fined 5s., and 20s. for a second offence. It appears, however, that the payment of one penalty will protect the offending barber from any further fine on the same day. Clause 6 saves servants from the operation of the Act, and visits their disobedience on their masters or mistresses. The police are required to enforce the provisions of the Act. Penalties and costs may be levied by distress, and imprisonment may be inflicted in default of payment for 14 days in the common gaol or house of correction. The penalties will be appropriated to the expenses of the police force. No informations are to be quashed for informality, or to be removed by *certiorari* into the Court of Queen's Bench. The Act (is) to commence (if passed) on the 1st day of November, or All Saints' Day, 1855. A more tyrannical measure was never attempted to be forced upon the people of this country, and if this 'Saints' Bill' is allowed to pass, a much more stringent Act will doubtless follow."

with the intention of holding a meeting of protest. A space was set aside for the meeting, and a Mr James Bligh called upon to preside. He began by addressing the people in very temperate language, but was soon interrupted by an Inspector of Police, who "politely told him he was authorised by the Commissioner of the Police to prevent any meeting being held in the Park; inasmuch as the Park was not public property, it would be illegal." The Inspector said that his orders were imperative, and if the speaker continued speaking he would be obliged to take him into custody. Sir Richard Mayne was present with a Superintendent of Police, and although the meeting was broken up, nevertheless many thousands remained in the Park. These lounged along the carriage ways and greeted the carriages with groans and hooting, or chaffing and good-humoured sarcasm, each according to his feelings. The aristocracy and wealthy commoners, who were taking their Sunday afternoon airing at their ease in the Park, did not at all approve of the attendance and attention of the multitude. The ladies and gentlemen reclining in their carriages were asked why they allowed their servants to work on Sunday, or were told to "go to Church," an order which some met by shaking their Church Services in the faces of the throng, or by sneers; whilst others, such as Lord and Lady Wilton, Lady Granville, and the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, were so frightened that they got out of their carriages at the demand of the crowd and trudged it on foot.

This little taste of the delights of showing the wealthy their power and of giving them a little bit of a fright only inflamed the people the more. During the week following the 24th the excitement continued to increase, and more handbills and placards were distributed. A very witty placard issued by the "Leave us alone Club," and some amusing lines, are quoted in Mr Headingley's Biography; while another which met with great success was in the following terms:—

"GO TO CHURCH!"

"Lord Robert Grosvenor wishes to drive us all to church! Let us go to church with Lord Grosvenor next Sunday morning! We can attend on his Lordship at Park Lane at half-past ten: 'go to church' with him, then go home to dinner, and be back in time to see 'our friends' in

Hyde Park. Come in your best clothes, as his lordship is very particular."

In the House, Lord Grosvenor fanned the flames of the popular excitement outside by an express refusal to withdraw the Bill, and by stating his fixed determination to press the measure. The signs of the increasing agitation amongst the people were so marked that Sir Richard Mayne, Commissioner of Police, became alarmed, especially as the police superintendents of various districts reported to him that large numbers of people were likely to attend the Park on the Sunday; and on June 29th he communicated with Sir George Grey, then Home Secretary, from whom, as he stated later on to the Commission, he received instructions to draft a document forbidding the meeting.

This notice was printed in one or two newspapers on the morning of Saturday the 30th, but not issued in the form of a handbill until the afternoon. It was then also posted throughout the metropolis, and on Sunday morning at the Park Gates.

In common with the rest of the London public, Mr Bradlaugh read this police notice, and directly he read it he felt convinced that the Commissioner of Police had no power to prevent a meeting in the Park. He therefore, after due consideration, resolved not to submit to this order, but to take part in the general concourse—one can hardly call it a meeting, since any attempt to form in a mass and listen to speeches had been prevented on the previous Sunday—in the Park, and if necessary to resist in his own person any active interference on the part of the police.

The 1st of July arrived, and people from every district of London and all round about flocked to the Park, crowding particularly towards the north side of the Serpentine. Although showing every disposition to be in the main quiet and orderly, the temper of the crowd was much less good-humoured than on the previous Sunday; the police placards had acted as a very successful irritant, and this feeling of irritation was kept up and augmented by the sight of the wealthy ones parading up and down in their carriages. As on the former Sunday, they were greeted with groans and hooting, and so much vigour was thrown into the groans that in two or three cases the high-spirited horses

took fright, and serious accidents appeared probable. At this point the police charged the people, and naturally enough rioting (so-called) was the result. Many persons were hurt, and seventy were taken prisoners. The police accommodation at the Marlborough Street Police Station proved totally inadequate for so large a number of prisoners, and the condition of the cells was compared with that of the Black Hole in Calcutta. My father was in the Park with my grandfather, Mr A. Hooper, and what he did there may be learned a little later on from his own words.

This demonstration in Hyde Park produced such an impression that on the following day, the 2nd of July, Lord Robert Grosvenor, in answer to a question put to him in the House of Commons, said he was in "rather an awkward predicament," a statement which we can readily believe. His Bill, the Honourable Member insisted, was in reality intended to increase the amount of holiday possible to "the overtaxed thousands of the metropolis. But," he went on, "considering this is one of those measures which are peculiarly liable to misrepresentation and ridicule; considering also the late period of the session, and the formidable opposition I am threatened with, I think it would not be right to keep up the irritation that at the present moment exists for the bare chance of passing this measure during the present session."

This abandonment of his Sunday Bill in a fright by "Saint" Grosvenor, as he was nicknamed, was a tremendous triumph to all those whom it affected, a triumph happily not marred by any punishment being inflicted on the men arrested on various charges connected with the demonstration, for when these were brought into court on the Monday they were all discharged. At the John Street Institution a meeting was held to protest against the action of the police, to express sympathy with the injured, and to collect subscriptions on their behalf.*

* Probably the re-formation of the National Sunday League on its present basis in the autumn of 1855 was in great degree owing to the attempted Sunday legislation of the summer; and it will perhaps be news to most of the Sunday Leaguers of to-day that in the March of 1856 Mr Bradlaugh was actively engaged in trying to form a branch of the League in the East End, of which he was the Secretary *pro. tem.*, and which was to hold its meetings in the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

A Royal Commission was appointed "to inquire into the alleged disturbances of the public peace in Hyde Park, Sunday, July 1st, 1855; and the conduct of the metropolitan police in connection with the same." This Commission sat continuously day by day from Tuesday, July 17th, to Thursday, August 2nd. The sittings were held in the Court of Exchequer, and the Commission heard eighty-six witnesses on the part of the complainants, and ninety-three for the police. Amongst the eighty-six witnesses was my father, who was examined on the 20th July. I quote the questions, with their often extremely characteristic answers, from the Parliamentary Blue Book.*

"Mr C. BRADLAUGH examined by Mr Mitchell :—

"Where do you reside?—At No. 13 Warner Street South, Hackney Road.

"You are a solicitor's clerk?—I am.

"Were you in Hyde Park on the 1st of July?—I was.

"At what time?—From about half-past three to half-past six.

"Where did you walk during that time? I walked completely over the park, round by the carriage drive, and all round during that time.

"Did you see a man in a cab with several policemen?—Yes. I saw a man being driven along in a cab with three policemen in the cab, a man with no shirt on; he was without his shirt, he was trying to look out, and I saw a policeman strike him over the temple with his truncheon.

"There were three policemen in the cab?—Yes.

"Mr Stuart Wortley: A man without a shirt?—Yes.

"Mr Mitchell: Did you see anybody attacked?—Yes, I saw a rush made out on to the greensward. I went forward, and I saw four or five policemen striking a short man: his hat was knocked with a truncheon, and he held up his hands and said, 'For God's sake, do not hit me—take me!'

"Did they continue to hit him?—Yes; I ran forward, and put one truncheon back with my gloved hand, and I said, 'The next man that strikes I will knock him down!'

"What did they do then?—Then they left off striking him, and they put him between two policemen, and I suppose he was taken away in custody.

"They found that you were rather a strongish man?—They would

"Were you attacked by the police?—I was standing on the grass

* Vol. XXIII. 1856, pp. 146, 147.

just after that, and they made another sortie out from the roadway, and ordered the people to move on, and they moved as fast as they could. One of them came up to me, and began to push me with his truncheon, upon which I said to him : 'Do not do that, friend ; you have no right to do it, and I am stronger than you are.' He then beckoned to two others, who came up, and I took hold of two of the truncheons, one in each hand, and I said to the centre one : 'If you attempt to touch me, I will take one of those truncheons, and knock you down with it.' I took the two truncheons, and I wrested them, and I showed them that I could do it.

"Did they then leave you alone?—Yes ; the people that came behind me picked me up and carried me up about 100 yards back, cheering me.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Did they take you off your legs?—Yes, and I thought it was the police behind for a moment.

"Mr Mitchell.—You were in the Park for three hours?—Yes.

"How were the people behaving?—I never saw a large assemblage of people behaving so well.

"You were with your father-in-law, were you not?—Yes, I was.

"What time in the day was this particular occurrence?—About half-an-hour before I left.

"Mr Henderson.—The people gathered round you?—Yes. I did not want to be a self-constituted leader, and immediately I could I got away from the press and came away. I left about half-past six, a few minutes after or a few minutes before.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Had the excitement in the Park increased a good deal at that time?—Yes ; I felt excited by seeing men, unable to defend themselves, knocked about.

"Mr Mitchell.—Did you see any other rush of the police at the people?—I saw several rushes. I could not understand the reason for them at all, except on one occasion ; I saw one mounted superintendent stretch out his arm, and I saw a rush immediately in the direction that his arm went.

"What sort of a horse had he?—I could not see ; I was on the sward. I only noticed a mounted man.

"You would not know him if you saw him again?—Yes ; I think so : I should certainly know him if I saw him mounted.

"Can you say whether he had whiskers or not?—Yes ; I think he had, but that is more an impression than anything else.

"Did you see them strike any woman?—I saw in the rush, in one of them, a man and two women thrown down, and I saw the police run over them. They did not strike them, but they ran right over them. I made a remark to my father-in-law : 'It is lucky they are no sisters of mine, or else they would stop to pick them up.'

"You did not go into the Park to resist the police?—Decidedly not.

I went in consequence of seeing the notice of Sir Richard Mayne forbidding it, and to see what took place there.

"Out of curiosity?—Not exactly. I had heard it said that they were rabble, and I did not believe it, and I went to see for myself.

"Your indignation was not excited till you got there?—Not till some time after I had been there. At first I should have come away. The police were doing nothing, and at first everything seemed to be very quiet. There was no kind of meeting, except that there had been a large concourse of people. I should have come away but for those rushes of the police amongst the people.

"They were not a disorderly crowd?—No.

"Cross-examined by Mr Ellis:—

"You spoke of Sir Richard Mayne's proclamation as forbidding this meeting. Did you read it?—Yes.

"Does it forbid it?—The tenor of it seemed to me to be forbidding the assemblage, and I had not heard then, and have not heard now, that Sir Richard Mayne has any power to forbid my going into the Park; therefore I went.

"I think that the language of this proclamation is, that all well-disposed persons are requested to abstain. You do not call that forbidding?—When those police notices are put up I remember one place where I was requested to abstain from going to, some few years ago; and when I went there I found that the request to abstain was enforced in a precisely similar way, by striking the people with truncheons who went there. That was at Bonner's Fields.

Were any persons struck with truncheons there?—Yes.

"Surely the police were armed with cutlasses?—I think I remember two being drawn as well; but I know some of them were struck with truncheons. I was struck with a truncheon myself, so that I am perfectly capable of remembering it.

"You were at Bonner's Fields?—I was.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Is there anything else that you wish to add?—Nothing.

"The witness withdrew."

In his "Autobiography"* Mr Bradlaugh says: "I was very proud that day at Westminster, when, at the conclusion of my testimony, the Commissioner publicly thanked me, and the people who crowded the Court of the Exchequer cheered me. . . .

---

* The Autobiography of Charles Bradlaugh. A page from his life, written in 1873 for the *National Reformer*.

This was a first step in a course in which I have never flinched or wavered."

Before dismissing this Sunday Trading question altogether, I may as well notice here that in the succeeding year my father made a short humorous compilation of some of the more striking "English Sunday laws" for the *Reasoner*. I am ignorant how many of these are still in force, but I repeat part of the article here: as a trifle from my father's pen, it will be welcome to some, and in others it may, perhaps, provoke inquiry as to how many of these restrictions are binding (in law) upon us to-day.

"Travelling in a stage or mail coach on a Sunday is lawful, and the driver is lawfully employed. Contracts to carry passengers in a stage coach on a Sunday are therefore binding, but the driver of a van travelling to and from distant towns, such as London and York, is unlawfully employed, and may be prosecuted and fined 20s. for each offence; and presuming that the laws of God and England are in unison, the driver of the van will be damned for Sabbath breaking, and the driver of the coach will go to heaven for the same offence.

"Mackerel may be sold on Sunday either before or after Divine service.

"There is no offence against the common law of England in trading or working on a Sunday; therefore the statutes must be strictly construed. If a butcher should shave on a Sunday, he would commit no offence, because it would not be following his ordinary calling.

"Persons exercising their calling on a Sunday are only subject to one penalty, for the whole is but one offence, or one act of exercising, although continued the whole day. A baker, a pastrycook, or confectioner, is liable to be prosecuted if selling bread or pastry before nine or half-past one o'clock on the Sunday.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's cook, groom, footman, butler, and all other his men servants and maid servants do not each of them attend church every Sunday, they may be prosecuted and fined.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's coachman drive his master to church on Sunday, if his footmen stand behind his carriage, these being their ordinary callings and not works of charity or necessity, they may be prosecuted and fined 5s. each.

"Tobacconists may be prosecuted for selling tobacco and cigars on a Sunday.

"Railway officials may be punished for working on a Sunday; certainly on excursion trains.

"The stokers and men employed on the steamboats plying to Gravesend, etc., are also liable to prosecution, although a few watermen enjoy the privilege of Sabbath-breaking by Act of Parliament.

"Civil contracts made on a Sunday are void with some few exceptions, viz. a soldier may be enlisted on a Sunday. A labourer may be hired on a Sunday. A guarantee may be given for the faithful services of a person about to be employed. A bill of exchange may be drawn on a Sunday.

"Civil process must not be served on a Sunday, but an ecclesiastical

citation may; therefore the Church reserves to itself the right of Sabbath breaking on all occasions.

"A cookshop may be open on a Sunday for the sale of victuals.

"Every person who should go to Hyde Park, or any of the other parks, to hear the band play, if out of his own parish, is liable to be fined 3s. 4d.

"If two or three go from out of their smoky city residences to the sea to fish, or to the green fields to play cricket, they may each be fined 3s. 4d. if out of the parish in which they reside."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORSINI ATTEMPT.

The first allusion which I can find to any lecture delivered by my father after his return from Ireland appears in the *Reasoner*, and is the briefest possible notice, in which no comment is made, either upon the speaker or upon his name, although I find the *nom de guerre* of "Iconoclast" and the subject (Sunday Trading and Sunday Praying) given. We may, therefore, conclude that by this time * he had become a tolerably familiar figure on the London Freethought platform. The next reference I come across relates to his first lecture, given on 24th August 1855, on behalf of Mr B. B. Jones, the aged Freethinker who sheltered him on his first leaving home, and for whose benefit he afterwards lectured every year during the remainder of the kindly old veteran's life.

In the latter part of 1856 my father's lectures are referred to in the reports of meetings with tolerable regularity, and I gather that even at that time he was lecturing four or five times a month. He lectured at a little hall in Philpot Street, Commercial Road; Finsbury Hall, Bunhill Row; at a hall in St George's Road, near the "Elephant and Castle," afterwards given up by the Freethinkers who were accustomed to hire it on Sundays, because they did not approve of the uses to which it was put during the week; at the Hoxton Secular Class Rooms, 101 High Street; and the John Street Institution, Fitzroy Square.

Amongst his many and varied occupations he yet contrived to make time for study, for in the same year he was lecturing on Strauss' "Life of Jesus," and Mahomet and the Koran, in addition to the more general questions of the Existence of God, Materialism, etc. And here I may cite a little instance showing that my father's power of repartee was a very early development. He happened to be lecturing upon "The God of the Bible," and in

* July 1855.

the discussion which ensued "a Christian gentleman, Mr Dunn, ... informed his auditory that it was only by God's mercy they existed at all, as all men had been tried and condemned before their birth, and were now prisoners at large." My father in his reply promptly took "objection to this phrase, as implying that society was nothing more than a collection of 'divine ticket-of-leave men.'"

In 1856, too, Mr Bradlaugh once more ventured into print. His first essay in the publishing way, it may be remembered, was the little pamphlet on the "Christian's Creed," which he dedicated to the Rev. Mr Packer. This time he issued, in conjunction with John Watts and "Anthony Collins," a little publication called "Half-hours with Freethinkers," which came out in fortnightly numbers, and opened on October 1st with a paper on Descartes from the pen of "Iconoclast." Two series were ultimately issued, each of twenty-four numbers, but some time elapsed between the two; in fact, the second did not come out until 1864, and was edited by my father and Mr John Watts. These stories "of the lives and doctrines of those who have stood foremost in the ranks of Freethought in all countries and in all ages" met with a hearty welcome, and are in demand even to this day; several were at the time reprinted in America by the *Boston Investigator*.

The new year of 1857 opened with a promise of growing activity by an address from "Iconoclast" to a party of Secular friends who had assembled in the hall at Philpot Street, to watch the New Year in, and by a course of ten (or twelve) lectures in criticism of the Bible, which he commenced on the following day. On the 12th of February, also, was held his first discussion, or at least the first I can find recorded, if we except the youthful encounters of Warner Place. The discussion between "Mr Douglas and Iconoclast" took place at the little Philpot Street Hall; but who Mr Douglas was I know not, for the report is limited to a mention of an allusion by the Christian advocate to Atheists as "monsters, brutes, and fools," which was—as we may well believe—"severely commented on by 'Iconoclast.'"

Another and more important work, however, was begun in the early spring of 1857. This was "The Bible: what it is: Being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelation." This work, advertised by my father as "intended to relieve the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge from the labour of retranslating the

Bible, by proving that it is not worth the trouble and expense," it was arranged should be issued in fortnightly numbers by Holyoake & Co., whose "Fleet Street House," situate at 147 Fleet Street, was to a considerable extent maintained by the Freethought party. After the third number, Mr G. J. Holyoake declined to publish, on the ground that Mr Bradlaugh would probably go too far in his mode of criticism, and that by publishing the book he would be identified with it. This seemed an inadequate reason, since Mr Holyoake published Spiritualistic works, a "Criminal History of the Clergy," and other books, with which he was most certainly not identified. Later Mr Holyoake based his refusal to publish on the ground that a short passage in the third number referring to the suggestion that the third chapter of Genesis was intended as an allegorical representation of the union of the sexes, was obscene. Mr Bradlaugh was both surprised and indignant, as well he might be, and wrote a letter to the *Investigator*,* explaining his position fully. He was obliged henceforward to publish his work himself; Mr Edward Truelove, who then had a bookseller's business at 240 Strand, generously rendering every assistance in his power.

By this time also he had become a regular contributor to the *Investigator*, and his first articles were upon the "Lives of Bible Heroes"—Abraham, Moses, David, and Cain, each following in turn.

On the 22nd of February 1858 Mr Truelove was arrested by Government warrant for the publication of a pamphlet written by Mr W. E. Adams, "Is Tyrannicide Justifiable?" in which was discussed the attempt made by Orsini upon the life of the French Emperor.

Referring to this, my father wrote some notable words in his Autobiography of 1873. "I became," said he, "Honorary Secretary to the Defence, and was at the same time associated with the conduct of the defence of Simon Bernard, who was arrested at the instigation of the French Government for alleged complicity in the Orsini tragedy. It was at this period I gained the friendship of poor Bernard, which, without diminution, I retained until he died; and also the valued friendship of Thomas Allsop, which I still preserve. My associations were thenceforward such as to encourage in me a strong and bitter feeling

* The *Investigator*. A Journal of Secularism, edited by Robert Cooper.

against the late Emperor Napoleon. Whilst he was in power I hated him, and never lost an opportunity of working against him until the *déchéance* came. I am not sure now that I always judged him fairly; but nothing, I think, could have tempted me either to write or speak of him with friendliness or kindliness during his life. *Le sang de mes amis etait sur son âme.* Now that the tomb covers his remains, my hatred has ceased; but no other feeling has arisen in its place. Should any of his family seek to resume the Imperial purple, I should remain true to my political declarations of sixteen years since, and should exert myself to the uttermost to prevent France falling under another Empire. I write this with much sadness, as the years 1870 to 1873 have dispelled some of my illusions, held firmly during the fifteen years which preceded. I had believed in such men as Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, Victor Hugo, as possible statesmen for France. I was mistaken. They were writers, talkers, and poets; good men to ride on the stream, or to drown in honest protest, but lacking force to swim against, or turn back, the tide by the might of their will. I had believed too in a Republican France, which is yet only in the womb of time, to be born after many pangs and sore travailing."

When Mr Bradlaugh acted as Secretary for the Defence, his duties were performed in no merely formal way, but with the utmost energy and enthusiasm. In order to give more time to this work, he suspended the publication of his Commentary on the Bible, and in issuing the "Appeal" for the Defence fund wrote in earnest entreaty for his staunch and fearless friend, saying truly enough, "It would be a stain on us for years if we left poor Truelove to fight the battle of the press alone."

But my father's sympathies were all his life long on the side of the weak and oppressed, and in this particular instance he came in personal contact with the friends and associates of Orsini, if not with Orsini himself (which, indeed, I am under the impression was the case), so that the whole tone of his surroundings was anti-Napoleonic. Felice Orsini must have been personally known to many of the advanced thinkers in England, for I notice that in the winter of 1856 he was lecturing at Woolwich (and probably elsewhere) on "Austrian and Papal Tyranny in Italy." Those who knew him, even those who could not approve his deed, yet honoured and revered him as a hero and a martyr.

My father spoke of him as "the noble, the brave, the true-hearted Orsini." In 1859, writing of him: "One year since and his blood was scarce dry! Bernard was a prisoner; Allsop a fugitive. Now Orsini lives: the spirit of his greatness passed into a hundred others, and the dead hero lives. Priests in their masses say, 'Pray for the memory of the dead;' we say, 'Work for the memory of the dead!' Orsini needs a monument o'er his grave. He is buried in the hearts of the freemen of Europe, and his monument should be indestructible Republicanism throughout France, Italy, Hungary, and Poland." Alas! for my father's dreams of a Republic for those striving and oppressed nations. Poland still lies at the feet of Russia, Hungary is held in the iron grasp of Imperial Austria, and but a year or so ago Republican France and Monarchical Italy were ready to fly at one another's throats.

The result of the prosecution of Mr Truelove, which is told more fully at the end of this chapter by an abler pen than mine, was the abandonment by the Government of all proceedings on certain conditions; and although Mr Truelove, as well as his friends, would have preferred a trial and acquittal to a withdrawal on the conditions accepted by his counsel, nevertheless it was an undoubted triumph for the principle of the liberty of the press and free discussion. When at length the struggle ended it was proposed to raise a sum of money to compensate Mr Truelove for the loss he must have sustained in his business, but this Mr Truelove, with true public spirit, chivalrously refused.

Dr Bernard, in the conduct of whose defence Mr Bradlaugh was also associated, seems to have been personally a most lovable man. I do not think that I myself recollect him, but he was so often spoken of in our family, and always with affection and regret, and his photograph so proudly kept, that he seems a familiar figure in my early memories; there was a tradition, of which as a child I was immensely proud (as though I had played a conscious and important part in the matter!) that the evening on which I was born, the 31st of March, my father was delivering an oration upon Orsini in some Hall in London; at the conclusion he was followed home by the police, and, being aware of the fact, he led his pursuers a pretty chase. The notes of this address were afterwards written out on thin paper and ironed, by an expert laundress attached to my father and mother,

into the folds of Dr Bernard's shirt and conveyed to him in prison. In a notice which he wrote of a meeting of the Political Reform League in the October of the same year, Mr Bradlaugh alludes to the presence of "Simon Bernard, who with his frank and good-humoured bearing seems quite unlike a conspirator." He not infrequently took the chair at Dr Bernard's meetings at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, and elsewhere, returning home on one occasion with sundry rents in his coat, the result of Catholic objections to Dr Bernard's strictures on the Pope, aided by the rancour of persons friendly to Louis Napoleon.

Mr Headingley* says that when Dr Bernard was tried, great anxiety was felt as to the verdict; and when it was known that one of the jurymen was a friend, he was sent into the jury box with his pocket full of sandwiches, so that he should not yield for want of food. But this proved a needless precaution, for the jury returned with a verdict of *Not guilty* after a consultation of less than an hour-and-a-half. Amongst other exciting incidents of the time, which he learned from my father's own lips, Mr Headingley relates that—

"Before the trial, and while Bernard lay in prison awaiting his fate, considerable fear was entertained lest he should be surreptitiously given up to the French authorities. A watch was therefore instituted over the prison; communications, in spite of all regulations to the contrary, were established with the prisoner; and the Defence Committee kept informed as to everything that happened within the walls. Had Bernard been removed, there were friends ever close at hand, both night and day, ready to give the alarm. A riot would very probably have ensued, and an attempt made to rescue Bernard in the confusion."

He goes on to say that "the organization of all these precautionary measures involved a great deal of labour, and required much tact. The presence of French police spies was supplemented by the interference of English spies; and against these it was necessary for Bernard's friends to be on the alert. On one occasion some mounted police followed Bradlaugh to his home in Cassland Road, Hackney. At another time he entered a restaurant near Leicester Square with Dr Bernard and Mr Sparkhall, an old and trusty friend, who subsequently joined and helped to organize the English legion that fought so well for Garibaldi. While they were discussing a French spy came in, and sitting down in the next compartment, soon pretended to be asleep. Bradlaugh, recognising the individual, leaned over the compartment, took a long spill, as if to light a cigar, and held the burning paper under the spy's nose.

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

As the man was only pretending to be asleep, this treatment did not fail to awake him most promptly. Further, this manner of dealing with him left no room for doubt as to his having been recognised, and he therefore simply rose and quietly left the restaurant, without even protesting against the burn inflicted on his most prominent feature. So numerous were the foreign spies in London at that time, that popular irritation was excited, and once Bernard himself was mistaken by a mob in the Park, and attacked as a French spy. His friends had great difficulty in shielding him and in persuading his aggressors that they were mistaken."

Thomas Allsop,* mentioned by Mr Bradlaugh in the same sentence with Bernard, was also present at the Reform League meeting, and he is described by my father as "a straightforward old gentleman, carrying his years well, and apparently untroubled by the late harassing events; his head gives you an idea of power and dogged determination—it is worth more than £200." These last words refer, I believe, to a reward of £200 which was offered for the apprehension of Mr Allsop in connection with the Orsini matter. Apart from the striking personality it represents, the name of Thomas Allsop will always bear a peculiar interest to admirers of Charles Bradlaugh, for it was he who bestowed upon the, even then, "strong man and strenuous fighter" the motto "Thorough," which his after life so amply justified, and of which he was so proud, saying, "When my work is over, and the stone covers the spot wherein I lie, may I be entitled to have the word 'Thorough' carven upon its face."

It was during these years of political excitement that my father became acquainted with Mazzini, Crispi, de Boni, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, and W. J. Linton.

The author of the "Tyrannicide" pamphlet has been so good as to write for me his "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh;" and as the references to this period are very interesting, I cannot do better than incorporate them here just as he sent them to me :—

"It was in 1858," Mr W. E. Adams tells us, "that I first made the personal acquaintance of Charles Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh was at that time known only as 'Iconoclast,' the general public

* Mr Allsop will be known to the English public as the author of the "Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." He died a few years before my father, and he lies near his friend at Brookwood.

having, I think, a very indistinct idea what his real name was. I had heard him as 'Iconoclast' at the old John Street Institution, where many another dead and gone controversialist had won plaudits from the listening crowd: Dr Mill, Henry Tyrrell, Samuel Kydd, Robert Cooper. There, too, the veteran Thomas Cooper had recited 'Paradise Lost,' or told the eloquent story of the cause of the Commonwealth. Iconoclast, then a tall, slender, yet powerful young man, with a face stern enough for an adjutant, and a carriage equal to that of an Elizabethan hero, was beginning to claim admission to the ranks of the leaders of advanced thought.

"The year 1858 was the year of Felice Orsini's attempt on the life of Louis Napoleon. I was at that time, and had been for some years previously, a member of a Republican association, which was formed to propagate the principles of Mazzini. When the press, from one end of the country to the other, joined in a chorus of condemnation of Orsini, I put down on paper some of the arguments and considerations which I thought told on Orsini's side. The essay thus produced was read at a meeting of one of our branches, the members attending which earnestly urged me to get the piece printed. It occurred to me also that the publication might be of service, if only to show that there were two sides to the question 'Tyrannicide.' So I went to Mr G. J. Holyoake, then carrying on business as a publisher of advanced literature in Fleet Street. Mr Holyoake not being on the premises, his brother Austin asked me to leave my manuscript and call again. When I called again Mr Holyoake returned me the paper, giving among other reasons for declining to publish it that he was already in negotiation with Mazzini for a pamphlet on the same subject. 'Very well,' said I, 'all I want is that something should be said on Orsini's side. If Mazzini does this, I shall be quite content to throw my production into the fire.' A few days later, not hearing anything of the Mazzini pamphlet, I left the manuscript with Mr Edward Truelove, with whom I have ever since maintained a close and unbroken friendship. Mr Truelove seemed pleased with the paper, offered to publish it, and proposed to get it printed. The essay, as I had written it, was entitled 'Tyrannicide, a Justification.' Mr Truelove, however, suggested that it should be called 'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable?' Then there was no name to the production, which, I need not say, bore many marks of the immaturity of the author. Mr Truelove said it would be as well

to adopt a *nom de plume*. But if any name was to appear to the pamphlet, I said I was disposed to think that it should be my own. And so it came to pass that the pamphlet appeared with the title—'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable? by W. E. Adams. Published by Edward Truelove, 240 Strand, London.' Two or three days after the announcement of the publication, when only a few hundred copies had been sold, Mr Truelove was arrested, brought before the Bow Street magistrate, and held to bail for publishing a seditious libel on Louis Napoleon. As a matter of course, nobody knew the author. It was suspected indeed that the name attached to the pamphlet was a fiction, and that the essay was the production of a French exile.

"The arrest of Mr Truelove was regarded as an attack upon the liberty of the press—an attempt to restrict the right of public discussion. So regarding it, a number of gentlemen, prominently identified with advanced opinions, formed what was called a 'Truelove Defence Fund.' Mr Bradlaugh, who was among the first to volunteer assistance, was appointed secretary of the committee; the late James Watson accepted the office of treasurer; and contributions and other help were received from John Stuart Mill, W. Cunningham, M.P., Dr Epps, Arthur Trevelyan, Professor F. W. Newman, W. J. Fox, M.P., Jos. Cowen, junr., Abel Heywood, P. A. Taylor, Harriet Martineau, etc. Six months after Mr Truelove had been arrested, the whole affair came to a most 'lame and impotent' conclusion. It was at the instance of Sir Richard Bethel, Attorney-General under Lord Palmerston, and probably at the instigation of the Government of Louis Napoleon, whom the pamphlet was alleged to have libelled, that the prosecution was commenced. The case was withdrawn by Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Attorney-General under the Government of Lord Derby, on the understanding that Mr Truelove would sell no more of the pamphlets. Down to the evening preceding the day fixed for the trial, Mr Truelove, though he had doubts as to the result, fully expected that the matter would be fought out. On that evening, however, when it was too late to instruct other counsel, Mr Truelove was informed that the counsel already retained for the defence announced that the affair would have to be compromised. So it came to pass that Chief Justice Campbell, six months after the prosecution had been instituted, dismissed Mr Truelove with many words of caution. It need not be said that Mr Bradlaugh was as

much disgusted with this termination of the case as Mr Truelove himself. The secret of the collapse, I think, was this:—Edwin James, who was retained for the defence, and who had political ambitions which were never fully realised on account of misdeeds which compelled him to retire from public life and from his own country, practically sold his client in order that the Government might be relieved from a distasteful and unpleasant position."

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY LECTURES AND DEBATES.

I DO not know at what date or at what place my father delivered his first provincial lectures, but the earliest of which I can find any record occurred in January 1858, when on the 10th of that month he delivered two lectures at Manchester, a town in which, as we shall see later on, he was not altogether unknown, although in a totally different capacity. In reading the little there is to read about these early lecturing days I have been impressed with the fact that while in London his lectures were favourably received, and he was evidently gaining goodwill as he went from one hall to another, in the country he seems to have touched the hearts and the feelings of his audiences for or against him wherever he went. At these first Manchester lectures the reporter writes: "His manly, earnest, and fearless style of advocacy were much admired, and evidently produced a deep impression. Everybody who heard him wished to hear him again." In the April following he lectured in Sheffield, and from that time forward his visits to the provinces were very frequent. Sheffield almost adopted him, and he went there again and again; in 1858 and 1859 he went also to Newcastle, Sunderland, Bradford, Northampton, Doncaster, Accrington, Blackburn, Halifax, Bolton, and other towns, leaving a trail of excitement in his wake wherever he went. The descriptions of his personal appearance and the comments on his lectures at this time are more or less amusing. The first I will note here shall be one from his own pen, written to Mr Alfred Jackson in 1858, on the occasion of his earliest visit to Sheffield. He says: "You ask me to tell you how you may know me. I am 6 ft. 1 in. in height, about twenty-five years of age, dress in dark clothing, am of fair complexion, with only the ghost of a prospective whisker."

In a brief account of his Sheffield lectures that year my father

says that when he reached the Temperance Hall a copy of the *Sheffield Independent* was put into his hands, in which the Rev. Brewin Grant announced his intention to take no notice of him. But Mr Grant proved to be of a rather fickle temper, for on the morning following this first lecture "a small bill was printed and industriously circulated, entitled 'Iconoclast clasted,' being a challenge to myself from this very Brewin Grant who had previously determined not to notice me." On the first night Mr Bradlaugh had "a perfect crowd of opponents;" on the second he found that fresh troops had been levied against him. These "were led to the fray by the Rev. Eustace Giles (a stout Dissenting minister with a huge black bag). After the lecture this gentleman rose to reply, and commenced by extracting from his bag three huge volumes of Van der Hooght's Hebrew Bible, which he declared was the original Word of God, and which he requested me to read aloud to the audience. I complied by reading and translating a verse, to each word of which Mr Giles and his coadjutors nodded approval."

Going to Newcastle in September, my father found that the description of his personal appearance had so preceded him that the gentleman who met him, Mr Mills, came "straight to me on the platform as though we were old acquaintances instead of meeting for the first time." In Newcastle he lectured twice in the Nelson Street Lecture Hall (which has quite recently, I believe, been turned into a market), and was fairly, if briefly, reported by the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. While in the town he took the opportunity of listening to a lecture delivered by "J. Cowen, jun.," as Mr Joseph Cowen was then styled.

From Newcastle he went to Sunderland, where a person who came from the Rev. Mr Rees, a clergyman of that place, brought him a parody of the Church service entitled "The Secularist's Catechism," which was intended as some far-reaching and scathing sarcasm on the Secularist's "creed," but which is really as pretty a piece of blasphemy as ever issued from the pen of a Christian minister. Mr Bradlaugh tells how the person who brought it "gave it to me in a fearful manner, keeping as far away from me as possible, and evidently regarding me as a dangerous animal; he backed towards the room door after putting the paper in my hand, and seemed relieved in mind that I had not in some manner personally assaulted him."

On his next visit to Sheffield, where he was announced to

deliver three lectures on three successive evenings, the walls were covered with bills advising the people to keep away, and the clergy in church and chapel publicly warned their congregations against attending the lectures. In spite of all these precautions (or was it because of them?) the lectures were a decided success, the audiences increasing with each evening, until on the last evening "the large Temperance Hall was full in every part, the applause was unanimous, and not one opponent appeared." The visit of "Iconoclast" to Bradford produced a great flutter in the clerical society of that town; and after he left we hear that "almost every missionary and clerical speaker opened fire upon him," and one sensitive gentleman wrote to the *Bradford Observer* expressing his grief that the Teetotal Hall should be "prostituted" by being let to the Freethought lecturer.

In his *Autobiography* my father himself puts the date of his first lecturing visit to Northampton as the year 1857, and this year is again given in the little book issued as a *souvenir* of the unveiling of the statue of their late member by the Northampton Radical Association in June 1894; but I am inclined to think that this is a mistake, that my father's memory misled him a little, and that he put the date a few months too early. In any case, although I have made diligent inquiry, the first lectures of which I can find any note took place on Sunday and Monday, January 30th and 31st, 1859, in the large room of the Woolpack Inn, Kingswell Street. On the Monday evening the chair was taken by the late Mr Joseph Gurney, J.P., who, in company with his old friend Mr Shipman, had already heard Mr Bradlaugh lecture at the John Street Institution in London, and had been much impressed by the ability and earnest eloquence of the young speaker. The people crowded the street outside the Woolpack Inn for some time before the doors of the lecture-room were open, and the room was packed in a few moments. I wonder how many times after that did Mr Gurney preside at densely packed meetings for Mr Bradlaugh! Mr Gurney himself subsequently attained all the municipal honours Northampton could bestow upon her deserving townsman, nominated Charles Bradlaugh seven out of eight times that he contested the borough, and only did not nominate him on the eighth occasion because his position as chief magistrate prevented him.

In the following March it was arranged that my father should lecture in the Guildhall, at Doncaster. Doncaster, with its

reputation as a race town, was also in those days the abode of the "unco' guid." Some of the inhabitants appear to have been much put out at the proposed lecture, and certain "Friends of Religion," as they called themselves, issued a "Caution to the public, especially the religious portion," in which they, the "People of Doncaster," are entreated to give "Iconoclast the extacy (*sic*) of gazing on the unpeopled interior of the Guildhall." The "Friends of Religion" prefaced their entreaty by announcing that "the juvenile destroyer of images" had been engaged as a "grand speculation!" Presumably this "Caution" resulted in a famous advertisement, for the *Doncaster Herald* says that the Guildhall was "crowded to excess," and in writing his account of the lecture, which he says was a "frantic panegyric in honour of hell and a blasphemous denunciation of heaven," the reporter to this journal seems to have worked himself up into a fine frenzy. One can almost see him with his tossed-back hair, his rolling eyes and gnashing teeth, as he hurled these dynamitic words at the readers of the *Herald*:—

"There boldly, defiantly, recklessly—with the air of the dreadnought bravo or the Alpine bandit—stood the creator's work [elsewhere styled 'clayformed ingrate'] toiling, sweating, labouring strenuously, to heap slander upon his creator, and to convert into odious lies the book by which that creator has made himself known to the world! . . . Need we go further to express our more than disgust—our horror—at the fact of a young and accomplished man standing forth in crowded halls, and, while the beauteous moon marches aloft in the vast and indefinable firmament, and the myriad of silvery stars shoot their refulgent rays upon the desecrated lecture-room, actually telling the people that no God lives! no Supreme hand fretted the brave o'erhanging firmament with golden fire—no Jehovah made the wide carpet of fair nature bespangled with laughing flowers—no God made roaring seas and mighty rivers—no God revealed the Bible—no God made man!"

One really needs to draw breath after all that: the lecture-room lighted by star rays, the firmament fretted with golden fire, the laughing flowers and roaring seas, must surely have carried conviction. The *Doncaster Chronicle*, if more prosaic, is not the less hostile. Its report thus describes the lecturer:—

"He is a tall, beardless, whiskerless young man, with a pale face, and has rather a harmless and prepossessing appearance"—[compare the *Herald's* 'Alpine bandit!']—"certainly not the fierce individual we had previously imagined him to be from the elements of destruction

indicated in his name—'the image breaker!' He is a person possessing great fluency of speech, of ready wit, and the declamatory style of his oratory is well calculated to excite and carry away a popular audience."

And the *Chronicle*, in a vain endeavour to outvie its colleague in choice epithets, winds up by styling the arguments of Atheists as "the miserable sophistry of these 'filthy dreamers,'" the delicate wording of which phrase would be hard for even a "coarse" Atheist to match, and urges that "for the sake of the youth of our town, the municipal authorities will not again lend the Guildhall for such an object." In Sheffield Mr Bradlaugh was rapidly growing in popularity; lecturing there again immediately after his Doncaster lecture, he had an audience of 2000 persons to hear his address on "Has Man a Soul?"

Later in the year he was again in Doncaster, and this time the "Friends of Religion" had succeeded so far in their endeavours that the Granby Music Hall was refused, and it was rumoured that the lectures would not be permitted. A temporary platform was however erected under the roof of the Corn Market, and, in lieu of the electric light of to-day, the lecturer was made dimly visible to his audience by means of a lamp raised upon a pole. The audience was said to number about 4000, "the hollow and partly arched roof of the Corn Market served as a sounding board, and the tones of Iconoclast, whilst speaking, were distinctly heard through the surrounding streets. Although the town was in a state of considerable excitement, the meeting was on the whole very orderly." It was a beautiful evening; and when the lecture was over several hundred persons escorted "Iconoclast in a sort of triumphant procession" to his lodgings. As this was not exactly in accordance with the anticipations of the "Friends of Religion," my father was informed by the Mayor that several magistrates had protested against the use of the Corporate property (the Corn Market), which they had occupied without the express permission of the Corporation, and in consequence the lectures must be given elsewhere. Accordingly, a large open yard near the market was obtained for that night; and although no fresh announcement was made, the news rapidly spread throughout the town. At half-past seven Mr Bradlaugh began to speak from a waggon. The subject was that of the "History and Teaching of Jesus Christ," and the audience, which increased every moment until it spread into the grounds of the adjoining Corn Market, ultimately numbering between 7000

and 8000 persons, was very quiet and attentive. Missiles were thrown from a neighbouring house, and fireworks also were thrown into the midst of the assemblage; they were soon put out, but "one cracker was kept by the lecturer and placed among other Christian evidences." On returning from the meeting to his lodgings, "a large stone was thrown, which partially stunned Iconoclast, and cut his head slightly."

In April he should have lectured at Accrington, but the proprietor of the hall was a publican, and the clergy and magistrates of the town had so worked upon his fears by threatening to refuse his license at the next Sessions that he drew back from his agreement. No other room was to be obtained; and as numbers of people had come from long distances to hear my father, he got leave to address them from a showman's waggon; but when the showman—notorious for his intemperance all over the district—"found that Iconoclast approached spiritual subjects less freely than himself," he, too, retracted his permission. Not to waste his time altogether, however, Mr Bradlaugh attended a meeting of the Accrington Mutual Improvement Society, at which, as it happened, the subject of the essay for the evening was "Jesus Christ." At Bolton the Concert Hall was engaged for his lectures on the 20th and 21st September; but when Mr Bradlaugh came from London to deliver the lectures, he found the walls placarded with the announcement that the lectures would not be permitted to take place. He brought an action against the Bolton Concert Hall Company for £7 damages for breach of contract, the £7 representing the expense to which he had been put. The jury, however, after being absent a considerable time, gave a verdict for the defendants. Needless to say that the closing of the Concert Hall did not prevent Mr Bradlaugh from lecturing in Bolton. Shortly afterwards the Unitarian Chapel, Moore Lane, was obtained, and he delivered three lectures on successive evenings, instead of two, as formerly announced.

At Halifax, in this year, his lectures produced the usual excitement. The town missionary rushed into verse upon the subject of "Iconoclast and the Devil," and issued his polite reflections in the form of a handbill. The lectures also resulted in a set debate between "Iconoclast" and the Rev. Mr. Matthias, which I shall notice later on. The story goes that at one of my father's lectures Mr Matthias was present, and wished to offer

some opposition at the conclusion. His friends sought to dissuade him, and even to hold him in his seat, but the reverend gentleman was so much in earnest, and was so excited, that he shook off the restraining hands, crying, "Unhand me, gentlemen. By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me."

In Glasgow, that autumn, Mr Bradlaugh was threatened with prosecution for blasphemy, with the result that his lectures at the Eclectic Institute were better attended than they had been before. A little later the Procurator Fiscal informed him that the prosecution was in his hands, and that "in the course of law" he would have to answer for his offence in Glasgow "against the Holy Christian religion." I cannot find that the matter was carried beyond this, however, so I suppose the Glasgow pietists contented themselves with empty threats.

Although thus actively engaged in the provinces during 1858 and 1859, my father by no means neglected work in London. He lectured at various halls on theological and political subjects, and took part in more general public work. In the spring of 1858 he was elected President of the London Secular Society in the place of Mr G. J. Holyoake, and those who know anything of his unremitting labours as President of the National Secular Society will comprehend that he was no mere figure-head, or President in name only. Amongst other things, he immediately set about issuing a series of tracts for distribution, of which he himself wrote the first.

On May 16th Mr Bradlaugh spoke at the John Street Institution at the celebration of Robert Owen's 88th and last birthday, and a little thing happened then which he was always proud to recall. It was Mr Robert Cooper's custom to read Mr Owen's papers to the public for him; but on this particular evening he was himself in ill-health, and had already exhausted his strength in addressing the meeting. Mr Owen had prepared a discourse on the "Origin of Evil," which Mr Cooper commenced to read as usual; but he being unable to continue, it fell to my father's lot to take up the reading. This was the last paper of Mr Owen's read in public, and almost the last public appearance of the aged reformer, who died on the 17th of the following November.

In the provinces there was often considerable difficulty in the matter of hiring halls or in keeping the proprietor to his contract after the hall had been hired, but in London there was either less

intolerance or more indifference, and the trouble arose less frequently. On one occasion, however, in March 1859, when Mr Bradlaugh was to have lectured in the Saint Martin's Hall on "Louis Napoleon," he recalls in his *Autobiography* that "the Government — on a remonstrance by Count Walewski as to language used at a previous meeting, at which I had presided for Dr Bernard—interfered; the hall was garrisoned by police, and the lecture prevented. Mr Hullah, the then proprietor, being indemnified by the authorities, paid damages for his breach of contract, to avoid a suit which I at once commenced against him."

In the winter of 1858 my father became editor of the *Investigator*, originally edited by Robert Cooper, and he was full of enthusiasm and belief in his ability to make the little paper a success. It had at that time a circulation of 1250, and he estimated that it needed twice that number to enable it to pay its printing and publishing expenses.

He commenced his conduct of the paper by a statement of his policy, and by a trenchant letter to Louis Napoleon. From the former I take the opening and concluding words as giving his first editorial utterance :*—

"We are investigators, and our policy is to ascertain facts and present them to our readers in clear and distinct language. If we find a mind bound round with Creeds and Bibles, we will select a sharp knife to cut the bonds; if we find men prostrating themselves, without inquiry, before idols, our policy is iconoclastic—we will destroy those idols. If we find a rock in our path, we will break it; but we will not quarrel with our brother who deems his proper work to be that of polishing the fragments. We believe all the religions of the world are founded on error, in the ignorance of natural causes and material conditions, and we deem it our duty to endeavour to expose their falsity. Our policy is therefore aggressive. We are, at present, of opinion that there is much to do in the mere clod-crushing sphere, in uprooting upas trees, hewing down creed-erected barriers between man and man, and generally in negating the influence of the priest. Our policy is of a humble character; we are content to be axebearers and pioneers, cutting down this obstacle and clearing away that. We respect the

* *Investigator*, November 1st, 1858, p. 124.

sower who delights in the positive work of scattering seed on the ground, but we fear that the weeds destroy much of the fruit of his labours. . . . .

"There is no middle ground between Theism and Atheism. The genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures are questions relevant to Secularism. It is as necessary for the Secularist to destroy Bible influence as for the farmer to endeavour to eradicate the chickweed from his clover field. We appeal to those who think our work fairly done to aid us in our labours; to those who will not work with us we simply say, do not hinder us.

"Our only wish and purpose is to make man happy, and this because in so doing we increase our own happiness. The secret of true happiness and wisdom lies in the consciousness that you are working to the fullest of your ability to make your fellows happy and wise. Man can never be happy until he is free; free in body and in mind; free in thought and in utterance; free from crowns and creeds, from priest, from king; free from the cramping customs created by the influences surrounding him, and which have taught him to bow to a lord and frown upon a beggar. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! That true liberty, which infringes not the freedom of my brother; that equality, which recognises no noblemen but the men of noble thoughts and noble deeds; that fraternity which links the weak arm-in-arm with the strong, and, teaching humankind that union is strength, compels them to fraternise, and links them together in that true brotherhood for which we strive."

The second number of the *Investigator* under his editorship is interesting to-day, as containing his earliest printed views upon "Oath-taking;" the third is also notable for its paper on "Emerson," the first article from the pen of "B. V." (James Thomson); and in the fourth Mr W. E. Adams commenced his contributions. It is evident that my father spared no effort to make the paper "undoubtedly useful," as he put it; but in spite of all his energy and his able contributors the *Investigator* did not pay its way. In April, too, he fell ill from a very severe attack of rheumatic fever, and was laid up for many weeks; so that at length, "being unable to sustain any longer the severe pecuniary burden cast upon him, and not wishing to fill his pages with appeals for charitable assistance," the journal was, with much regret, discontinued in August 1859. In the final number he pens a few "last words,"

which are worth the reading, and in which he says that his reason for the discontinuance is very simple—"I am poor"—and in a rarely despondent mood he bids his readers "farewell," as he may perchance never address them again.

Delivering Freethought lectures and editing a Freethought journal undoubtedly absorbed much of Mr Bradlaugh's time, but these occupations engrossing as they were did not make him unmindful of his duties as a good citizen, and he was always taking some part or other in the political movements going on around him. At a meeting held in the Cowper Street School-room in November 1858, to advocate the principles of the Political Reform League, at which the League was represented by Mr Passmore Edwards and Mr Swan, and the Chartists by Ernest Jones, Mr Bradlaugh is reported as seconding a resolution in an "earnest, lucid, and eloquent manner," and as having "enforced the duty of every man to preserve the public rights, by unitedly demanding and steadfastly, peaceably, and determinedly persevering to obtain that position of equality in the State to which they were as men entitled;" now, as always hereafter, urging the *peaceful* demand of constitutional rights: a point I am anxious to lay stress upon, as this is the time when some of my father's later critics assert that he was rude, coarse, and, above all, violent.

The chairman of the meeting, who was also the churchwarden of Shoreditch, and a man apparently much respected, at the close quaintly said "he had not met that young man (Mr Bradlaugh) before that night, but he was most highly pleased to find in him such an able advocate of principle; he hoped he would be as good and faithful an advocate when he became old."

On the first Sunday in March 1859, the working men of London held a great meeting in Hyde Park to protest against the Government Reform Bill. They were very much in earnest, and although the time for the speaking was fixed for three o'clock in the afternoon, long before that hour the Park was thronged with people. About half-past two a man was hoisted on the shoulders of two others, and was greatly cheered by the crowd, who thought this was the opening of the proceedings. When, however, the person so elevated proclaimed to his listening auditors that "those who dared to take part in a political meeting on the Sabbath would be grossly offending the Almighty," the cheering was changed to

uproar and confusion, which only the advent of the real chairman sufficed to calm. The *Times* says that after the meeting had been duly opened, "Mr Bradlaugh, a young man well known in democratic circles, came forward and addressed the meeting." The report which follows is probably the first vouchsafed to Charles Bradlaugh by the great daily; and, judging from the number of "Cheers" and "Hear, hears," and even "Loud cheers" that the reporter managed to include in his score of lines of report, it was much more generous to him in '59 than at any later period. This meeting, like so many of its kind, and like the great majority of those with which my father was concerned, was remarkable for its orderliness; there was no police interference at any of the groups (several meetings were held simultaneously), and there was hardly a constable visible. On the Friday following, the 11th, a meeting was held at the Guildhall "to consider the measure of Parliamentary Reform introduced by the Ministry." The chair was taken by the Lord Mayor, and the speakers included Baron Rothschild, one of the three members for the City, Samuel Morley, P. A. Taylor, and Serjeant Parry. Ernest Jones, who rose to move an amendment, was refused a hearing—under a misapprehension, it is said. When Baron Rothschild began to speak he was considerably interrupted. "Loud calls," said the *Times* on the following day (when it was a trifle less polite than on the previous Monday), "were also raised for 'Bradlaugh'—a youthful orator who seemed a great favourite with the noisier Democrats." The poor Lord Mayor vainly tried to restore order, but louder grew the tumult and "more deafening" the calls for "Bradlaugh." Baron Rothschild was at length obliged to limit his speech to "I beg to second the motion;" and even these few words were only audible to those within two or three yards of him. When the meeting was drawing to a close, and the usual vote of thanks to the chair had been proposed—

"The Lord Mayor acknowledged the compliment, at the same time expressing his deep regret that persons should have come to the hall bent on creating a disturbance. At this juncture a young man, with fair hair and thin but intelligent features, was seen gesticulating vehemently at the extreme end of the platform, to which he had worked his way unobserved amid the general confusion. His name, it appeared, is Bradlaugh, and his object evidently was to gratify his admirers by delivering an harangue. His words were, however,

drowned by the conflicting clamour from the body of the hall. The Lord Mayor seemed to beckon him to the rostrum, as though his claim to speak were to be allowed; but a minute or two of indescribable confusion intervening, his Lordship came forward and then declared the meeting to be dissolved. This announcement had hardly been made when Mr Bradlaugh reached the part of the platform for which he had been struggling. His triumph was, however, very short lived. In an instant the Lord Mayor, though having one of his arms in a sling, was upon the refractory Chartist leader, and collared him with the energy and resolution of a Sir William Walworth. Two of the city officers promptly seconding his Lordship's assertion of his authority, Mr Bradlaugh was dragged forcibly to the back of the platform, and fell in the scuffle. All this was but the work of a moment, yet the uproar which it provoked continued after every occupant of the platform had retired. The undaunted orator found his way to the body of the hall unhurt, where he addressed such portions of the crowd as had not dispersed in frantic and excited eloquence. A considerable time elapsed before the building was cleared, during which Anarchy and Bradlaugh had undisputed possession of the scene."

How much of fact and how much of fiction there is in this lively account the *Times* only knoweth. The idea that a "Sir William Walworth" with one arm in a sling could "collar" a man of my father's herculean strength is sufficiently ridiculous. I myself saw him as late as 1877 at a stormy meeting take two unruly medical students in one hand and one in the other, and force them down the hall to the door, where he cast them out. His resistance to his fourteen assailants on August 3rd, 1881, is historic. It is hardly probable that a man who could do these things when he had passed the fulness of his strength would, when in the height of his vigour, have tamely submitted to be "collared" by a one-armed man and then dragged back and thrown to the ground by two "city officers;" and all "the work of a moment!"

Gatherings opposing the Government Reform Bill were held in different parts of London and the country; and Mr Joseph Cowen, himself President of the Northern Reform Union, writing to a friend in reference to them, on the 16th March, says incidentally: "Bradlaugh is a clever young fellow—full of vigour and daring—and is altogether a likely man to go ahead if he has any backing."

Considering the limited time at his disposal, there is really a

tremendous record of public work for these two years, 1858 and 1859; for in addition to that which I have already mentioned, my father held several debates, some of them continuing for three or four nights in succession. He had his first formal encounter in June 1858. Prior to this, he had gained a little practice in discussing with the numerous opponents who used to rise after his lectures; then there was the more extended, but apparently informal, debate with Mr Douglas, to which I referred some time ago; and also, in the early part of 1858, Mr Bradlaugh seems to have arranged to speak at considerable length in opposition to the lectures given by Thomas Cooper in the Hall of Science, City Road; but the brief notices of these which appeared do not enable one to form any opinion, beyond remarking a decided irritability on the part of Mr Cooper, who permitted himself to use distinctly unparliamentary language. The first formally arranged debate in which he took part was a four nights' discussion with the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., then a dissenting minister at Sheffield, and was held in that town on the 7th, 8th, 14th, and 15th June. In 1873 my father, writing of this occasion, said: "Mr Grant was then a man of some ability, and, if he could have forgotten his aptitudes as a circus jester, would have been a redoubtable antagonist." The audiences were very large; the numbers of persons present on the different nights ranged from eleven to sixteen hundred; and, considering the heat of the weather and the still greater heat of the discussion, my father's testimony is that they "behaved bravely." Writing shortly afterwards, he says: "The chairmen (both chosen by Mr Grant) behaved most courteously to me, and, in fact, the only disputed point of order was decided in my favour." He seems to have been particularly impressed by Alderman H. Hoole, the Chairman for the first two nights, who by an act of kindly courtesy quite outside the debate, showed that the gibes and sneers in which Mr Grant so freely indulged had little weight even with his own friends.

A friend in Sheffield has lent me the report of the discussion, printed at the time by Mr Leader of the *Sheffield Independent*, and which both disputants agreed was a very fair representation of what was said. According to the arranged terms, Mr Bradlaugh led the first night, and the Rev. Brewin Grant on each succeeding evening. The proposition to be affirmed by "Iconoclast" on the first evening was: "The God of the Bible, revengeful, inconstant,

unmerciful, and unjust. His attributes proven to be contradicted by the book which is professed to reveal them." His opening speech was made in clear, concise language, was directly to the point, and was listened to with the utmost attention. He drew the picture of the Deity who, reviewing his creation, pronounced everything that he had made "very good" (Gen. i. 31); "yet in a short period the same Deity looks round and declares that man is so bad that he repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart [Gen. vi. 6]; and in consequence God, to relieve himself from this source of grief, determined to destroy every living thing, and he did destroy them by deluge, for it repented him that he had made them, because man was so very wicked." He dwelt upon this at some length; then passed on to the selection of Noah and his family, "part of the old stock of mankind having personal acquaintance with all pre-existing evil," to re-people the earth; and concluded his first half-hour by asking where was the love, where the justice towards the Amalek, against whom "the Lord hath sworn" to have war "from generation to generation"? It was now the turn of the Rev. Brewin Grant to reply to this terrible indictment against the Deity whose professed servant he was; and it is interesting to mark the manner in which he set about his task. He commenced by unburdening himself of a few minor personalities against my father, and when a few of these petty sneers—the only possible object of which could be to provoke ill feeling—were off his mind, he indulged his overwhelming passion for raising a laugh. For this he made an opportunity in dealing with the causes which led to "the Flood," asking whether "Iconoclast imagines that, because God knew of these sins before they were committed, he should have drowned men before they were created." This, of course, provoked the desired merriment, and, temporarily satisfied, Mr Grant proceeded to his argument with acuteness and ability. Unfortunately, his peculiar temperament would not allow him to keep this up for very long; and while still in his first half-hour speech he drew a comparison of God's repentance with that of a merchant who repents him of engaging a certain clerk, and made the merchant say, "Wherein can you find fault? Am I a Secularist that I should lie, or an infidel committee-man that I should violate a ratified agreement?" "Iconoclast" is once more taunted with blindness and ignorance; and "infidels" with amusing "auditors in holes of

progress;" and so the reverend (never was a title more meaningless) gentleman's speech came to a conclusion. It would have been small wonder if a young, hotly enthusiastic man as my father then was, had been roused to angry retaliation, and so turned aside from the real points in dispute; but he did not so soon lose the coolness with which he had started. He made a few short answers to the personalities, and proceeded at once to deal with the arguments urged by Mr Grant; and, these disposed of, continued to build up his own position. The greater part of Brewin Grant's next speech was argumentative, but not all; he made an opportunity to tell his antagonist that his strength lay "not in his logic, but in his lungs;" that one of his objections was "too foolish," but he (Grant) "condescended to notice it;" and further, that "no class of men with which I am acquainted has had all honesty so thoroughly eaten out by trickery and falsehood as the infidel class." The next quarter of an hour fell to my father, who hardly noticed Mr Grant's gibes; but when the latter made his speech, the final one of the evening, he still interlarded it with innuendoes against the "infidel." The propositions affirmed by Mr Grant on the succeeding nights were shortly as follows: The Creation story consistent with itself and with science; the Deluge story consistent with itself and physically possible; and finally, "Iconoclast" as a commentator on the Bible, "deficient in learning, logic, and fairness." But the story of the first night was merely repeated on the later evenings; as feeling grew a little warmer, or there was something more than usually offensive in Mr Grant's personalities, Mr Bradlaugh was once or twice evidently roused to anger; but after reading the debate I only wonder that he had the patience to carry it through to the end.

I have dwelt upon this debate much longer, as I am well aware, than it really deserves; but I have done so for two reasons: (1) That being the first set debate, formally arranged and fairly reported, it should have a special interest, inasmuch as we should expect it to show to a certain extent the measure of Mr Bradlaugh's debating powers at the age of twenty-six; and (2) because the idea has been so diligently spread abroad, and possibly received with credence by those who were not personally acquainted with either disputant, that Mr Bradlaugh found in the Rev. Brewin Grant a powerful opponent. By my father's testimony, Mr Grant was a man of ability; by his own—as shown by quotations I have

here given—he was an unscrupulous slanderer. He had a power, it is true, and that power consisted in his willingness to weary and disgust his antagonist and his audience (friends as well as foes) by low jests and scandalous personalities. In the course of this debate he scornfully told his audience that he was not speaking to them but to the thousands outside: by those thousands, if perchance he has so many readers, will he be judged and condemned.

In March 1859 a debate between Mr Bradlaugh and Mr John Bowes was arranged at Northampton. My father describes Mr Bowes as "a rather heavy but well-meaning old gentleman, utterly unfitted for platform controversy." The *Northampton Herald*, which professed to give an "outline" of this debate, announced that the "mighty champion" of the Secularists was "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh, who endeavoured to impose upon the credulity of the multitude by arrogating to himself the high-sounding title of 'Iconoclast.'" Mr John Bowes the *Herald* put forward as a "gentleman well known for his contests with the Socialists and the Mormonites." The *Herald's* outline-report was reprinted in the *Investigator*, with a few additions in parentheses; but a note is appended that it is very imperfect, and my father having by this time fallen ill with rheumatic fever, he was unable to revise it. There is just one passage in Mr Bradlaugh's opening speech which is given fairly fully, and which it is desirable to repeat here, for in it he lays down his position as an Atheist, a position to which he adhered until his last hour.

"He did not deny that there was 'a God,' because to deny that which was unknown was as absurd as to affirm it. As an Atheist he denied the God of the Bible, of the Koran, of the Vedas, but he could not deny that of which he had no knowledge."

This statement Mr Bradlaugh made, in varying words, over and over again, and yet over and over again religious writers and speakers have described, and probably they always will describe, the Atheist as "one who denies God."

In the years 1859 and 1860, despite the fact that in the former year he lay for many weeks very seriously ill, discussions, as he himself says, grew on him "thick and fast." "At Sheffield I debated with a Reverend Dr Mensor, who styled himself a Jewish Rabbi. He was then in the process of gaining admission to the Church of England, and had been put forward to show my want of scholarship. We both scrawled Hebrew characters for four

nights on a black board, to the delight and mystification of the audience, who gave me credit for erudition because I chalked the square letter characters with tolerable rapidity and clearness. At Glasgow I debated with a Mr Court, representing the Glasgow Protestant Association, a glib-tongued missionary, who has since gone to the bad; at Paisley with a Mr Smart, a very gentlemanly antagonist; and at Halifax with the Rev. T. D. Matthias, a Welsh Baptist minister, unquestionably very sincere."

I have not been able to get a report of the debate with Dr Mensor, and indeed I do not think one was ever printed. The discussion with the Rev. T. D. Matthias was for many years on sale with other Freethought publications, and has doubtless been read by many. The subject of the debate was "The Credibility and Morality of the Four Gospels," and it was continued for five successive nights—October 31st, November 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 1859. It grew, as we have already seen, out of lectures delivered in Halifax by Mr Bradlaugh, and was with one or two exceptions conducted with such calmness, courtesy, and good feeling, that at the conclusion each gentleman expressed his appreciation of the other. The Court debate was not held until 1860, and was a four nights' debate, terminating on March 20. The use of the City Hall was refused on the ground "that such meetings tend to riot and disorder," and the discussions were therefore held in the Trades' Hall, which on each evening was crowded to the door. The chair was taken by the late Alexander Campbell, whom Mr Bradlaugh speaks of as "a generous, kindly-hearted old Socialist missionary, who, at a time when others were hostile, spoke encouragingly to me, and afterwards worked with me for a long time on the *National Reformer*." Mr Campbell edited the *Glasgow Sentinel*, and in the issue of March 17, 1860, there is an allusion to the debate then being carried on between "Iconoclast" and Mr Court, of "The Protestant Layman's Association." Says the *Sentinel*, "Few Scottish clergymen are fit for the platform. The pulpit, indeed, unfits for logical debate, but the Protestant community ought to feel well pleased that in Mr Court . . . they have a skillful and redoubtable champion of Christianity." The *Glasgow Daily Bulletin*, giving a few words to the final night, says that "the speaking during the evening was excellent and occasionally excited, but the conduct of the audience was orderly in the extreme. Mr Bradlaugh was animated and forcible, and exhibited many of

the traits of a great speaker. Mr Court's university career is evidently polishing and improving him." The audience passed a resolution of censure upon the authorities who refused the City Hall, regarding it as involving a slander upon the community of Glasgow. A friend, after much searching, came across and sent to me a fragment of the published debate; but as it contains only one complete speech from each disputant and parts of two others, one cannot say much about it. Mr Court seems to have been unusually smart, and the *Daily Bulletin's* reference to his "university career" accounts for the numerous literary quotations which adorned his speech.

The *Paisley Journal* gives a short notice of the debate with Mr John Smart of the Neilson Institute, which was held for two successive nights in the Paisley Exchange Rooms in March 1860. Speaking of the first night's audience, it says it "was the largest we ever saw in the Exchange Rooms, the whole area, gallery, and passages being crowded;" on the second night the audience was estimated at between 1100 and 1200. The discussion for the first night was upon the four Gospels; and the editor remarks: "Of course, there will be differences of opinion as to which of the debaters had the best of the argument; but those who could clear their minds of partisanship will perhaps be of opinion that Mr Bradlaugh's speeches displayed boldness and vigour, with great information on the subjects at issue; that Mr Smart showed himself as an accomplished scholar, with a mass of knowledge ever ready to bring up in illustration of his views; and that each had a foeman worthy of his steel." The subject for the second night was a consideration of the teachings of Christ. The *Journal* thought that "both speakers brought their best arguments and greatest powers of intellect into the subject." Mr Bradlaugh enforced his objections "in powerful voice and vigorous language, and with telling effect. In his own quiet scholarly way—closely, tersely, and clearly, Mr Smart took up most of the objections and discussed them *seriatim*." It will be seen that the *Paisley Journal*, at least, tried to clear its mind of "partisanship," and to hold the scales evenly.

CHAPTER X.

HARD TIMES.

The question will probably have presented itself to many minds, If Mr Bradlaugh was giving up so much time to public work, to lecturing, reform meetings, debating, etc., how was he living the while? what was his home life, and in what way was he earning his bread? It will be remembered that, after leaving the army in 1853, he was before the year was out in the employ of Mr Rogers, solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, first as "errand boy" at 10s. a week, and then as clerk at a slowly increasing salary. After a few months at Warner Place, he and my mother went to live in a little four-roomed house at No. 4 West Street, Cambridge Heath, where my sister Alice was born. In the previous January my father had had a very troublesome piece of litigation to conduct for his firm at Manchester. Often and often has he told us the story of it, and he used to work us up into a state of excitement by his graphic account of his capture of two men at night from a common lodging house in one of the low parts of Manchester; of his interview at the Albion Hotel with Mr Holland, a surgeon implicated in the case, who, when my father rose to ring the bell for some lemonade, mistaking the intent, rose in alarm, and cried, "For God's sake, don't!" These and other episodes in the case remained clearly enough in my memory, but when I wished to retell the story in a connected form, I found myself altogether at a loss. First of all, I could not remember that my father ever mentioned the date of these legal adventures, and without the date I could do little in the way of searching for press reports. However, I found a clue to this in the following letter, which was amongst those papers of my mother's which, as I have said, I looked through quite recently for the first time:—

"North Camp, Aldershot,
"29th January 1856.

"Madam,—Mr Bradlaugh has been kind enough to send me, during

the last few days, some Manchester newspapers containing reports relative to the case of suspected poisoning. Not knowing where to address him now, I take the liberty of writing to you. Will you be so kind as to convey to him my thanks for the papers, and my hearty congratulations on his having obtained the management of the prosecution; it is an opportunity of distinguished service. With his wonderful acuteness and energy (Mr Bradlaugh and myself are such old and close friends that we do not mince words in speaking of or to each other) he will surely distinguish himself, and thus, as I suppose and hope, be in a fair way for promotion, as we phrase it. Watching the case with great interest, I thought his cross-examination of Mr Holland, the surgeon, extremely good and well conducted; but as this is merely an unprofessional opinion, he will not care much for it, although so favourable.

"Trusting that yourself and the other members of the family are enjoying good health, I have the honour to be, Madam, yours most respectfully, JAS. THOMSON, Schoolmaster.

"Depôt, 1st Rifles.

"Mrs C. Bradlaugh."

Apart from the subject, this letter has in itself a special interest to personal admirers of "B.V.": the handwriting—the earliest specimen in my possession—is singularly unlike Mr Thomson's writing of later years, so unlike that it was not until I had looked at the signature that I realised who was the writer, although I am so familiar with his writing that I should not have thought it possible that I could hesitate in recognising it.

The poisoning case must have aroused considerable attention in Manchester at the time. It arose in this way:—An insurance company called The Diadem Life Insurance Company had reason to believe that frauds were being practised upon them in Manchester through their agent, and consequently instructed their solicitor to investigate one case which they deemed unusually suspicious. The solicitor happened to be Mr Rogers, and he sent his clerk, Mr Bradlaugh, to Manchester to conduct the proceedings there. A man named John Monahan, a waterproof worker, had become insured in the Diadem Office for £300; and after paying the premiums he died, leaving a will securing the £300 to his son James Monahan. Certain facts had been kept back from the Insurance Company at the time of taking out the policy, and the man's age had also been wrongly given. Investigations led, first, to the belief that the will had not been written until three weeks after the testator's death—and this was subsequently sworn to by witnesses, one of

whom wrote out the will—and finally, to the possibility that the old man, John Monahan, had been poisoned. Two men implicated in the matter Mr Bradlaugh himself captured and handed over to the police in the middle of the night, and, in consequence of the evidence sworn to, an order was made for the exhumation of the body of Monahan. As there was no record of the place of burial, the details of the exhumation were revolting in the extreme. For four days a gang of men were employed in digging up bodies in an almost haphazard manner under the vague directions, first, of the sexton and next of a niece of the deceased. Mr Bradlaugh, after consulting with the coroner, contracted with a Mr Sturges to undertake the work with more system. Sixty or more bodies were dug up, and at length one of these was identified as that of Monahan. Under the circumstances one cannot believe that the identification was very precise; the body had been lying in a common grave for between five and six months, and no one's memory seems to have been clear enough even to point out the spot where the old man was buried. Mr Bradlaugh was always of opinion that they did not get the right body after all, although in the body found there were traces of poison. These traces the medical evidence did not judge sufficient to justify a charge of poisoning, and this count therefore fell to the ground. The counsel engaged on behalf of the accused son, James Monahan, was very indignant that my father should be allowed to conduct the prosecution; he protested that heretofore the rule in that court was that no one should be allowed to practise in that court unless an attorney, or solicitor, or barrister. On the last occasion, the counsel went on, as the prisoners had been apprehended only the night before, and therefore, as there was not perhaps time to instruct a professional man, Mr Bradlaugh had been allowed to appear. Other clerks had been refused to appear, and he could not see why a different rule should be adopted in this case. To expedite the business, he suggested that the case should, according to ordinary practice, be conducted by a solicitor or barrister. Mr Bradlaugh said he had appeared to conduct cases for his employer in London police courts, and this was a matter entirely within the discretion of the Court. He urged that he alone was in possession of all the facts of the case, and that he could not communicate his knowledge to any other person. Mr Maude (the magistrate) remarked that it had been the general rule in that court that parties should be represented either by counsel

or solicitor, but there was no rule without an exception, and looking at the peculiarity of this case, he thought it would be very inconvenient now not to allow Mr Bradlaugh to elicit the facts.

At a later stage of the proceedings a Mr Bent, who was watching the case on behalf of another of the prisoners, objected, on the part of the solicitors practising in the court, to Mr Bradlaugh, an attorney's clerk, being allowed to appear, but the Bench overruled his objection. In consequence of the medical evidence as to the condition of the exhumed body, the charge of poisoning had, of course, to be entirely abandoned, but in the March following James Monahan and two others were charged with having, on 3rd August 1855, "feloniously forged a will purporting to be the last will and testament of John Monahan, and with having uttered the same, knowing it to be forged," and another was charged with having feloniously been an accessory after the fact. The jury found Monahan guilty, but acquitted the others. Keefe, the fourth man, was then charged with having taken a false oath, and to this he pleaded guilty.

In September 1857 my father moved from West Street to 3 Hedgers Terrace, Cassland Road, Hackney, where I was born in the March of the following year. He now began to think it was quite time to take some definite steps towards the advancement of his position in life, and with that object in view he wrote the following letter to Mr Rogers :—

"Dear Sir,—I have been in your employ above four years, and am now twenty-five years of age. I have a wife and child, beside mother and sisters, looking to me for support ; under these circumstances it is absolutely necessary that I should make the best position I can for myself. My object in now addressing you is to ascertain if there is any probability of my obtaining my articles from you, and if so, at what period? You must not be offended with me for this, because we are in the position of two traders. I have my brains for sale, you buy them. I naturally try to get the best price—you perhaps may think I sell too high. I have already this year refused three situations offered to me. The first (although it was £160 a year) I refused because it came just after my last increase of salary ; the second because it did not involve the articles ; and the third because it was made to me immediately prior to the death of Mr Rogers, and I thought it would be indelicate then to trouble you. My question to you now is, Do you feel willing to give me my articles? Of course, I need not say that I have not the means to pay for the stamp, and the matter therefore involves the question of an

advance of £80. I would, however, gladly serve you for the five years at the salary I now receive, and I would enter into any bond, however stringent, to prevent loss of practice to you in the future. If you feel inclined to do this, name your own time within six months: if, on the contrary, you think I set too high a value on my capabilities, or have determined not to give articles to any clerk, I shall be obliged by an early reply.

"Whatever may be the result of this application, I trust you will believe that I am grateful for the many past kindnesses you have shown me, and that the good feeling at present existing may not be lessened between us. I have my way in life to make—yours to a great extent is smooth and easy; but as you have struggled yourself, I am willing to hope you will not blame me for trying hard to make a step in life.—Yours very respectfully,

"(Signed) CHAS. BRADLAUGH.

"Thos. Rogers, Esq."

This letter is undated and without address; and it will be noted as a curious point of interest, in one so very business-like and practical, that Mr Bradlaugh rarely did put his address or date on the letters he wrote with his own hand. If the address happened to be stamped on the paper, well and good, if not, he rarely wrote it; and his nearest approach to dating his letters was to put upon them the day of the week. I do not, of course, say that he never went through the customary form of putting the date or address, but that he more often than not omitted it. This habit, contracted early in life, he retained until his death, and in fact the very last letter entirely written with his own hand was merely dated with the day of the week.

The precise reply to this appeal I do not know; that it must have been in the negative, and that my father had to seek for some one else who would give him his articles on the terms indicated in his letter is clear. This person he thought he had found in Mr Thomas Harvey, solicitor, of 36 Moorgate Street, and he quitted Mr Rogers in order to be articled to him. The draft of the articles of agreement found amongst my father's papers bears the date November 16th, 1858. This connection proved to be a most unfortunate one for my father; for Mr Harvey shortly afterwards fell into money difficulties, in which Mr Bradlaugh also became involved. My father's troubles—as troubles ever seem to do—came, not singly, but in battalions; he was now not only without regular employment and in serious pecuniary difficulties, but

rheumatic fever seized upon him, and laid him for many weeks in the spring and early summer of 1859 on his couch in his little room at Cassland Road. In August, still weak, poor, and full of care, he was, as I have said, obliged to stop the *Investigator*, and give up for the time his cherished project of editing a Freethought journal.

When poor people are ill, necessity compels them to curtail the period of convalescence, so before my father was able to go out he strove to do writing work at home, although the rheumatism lingering in his right hand rendered the use of the pen painful and difficult. As soon as he could get about again he began once more lecturing and debating (as we have seen) with renewed energy. Anyhow the stories are legion of the fortunes he made upon the platform and through his publications, though a few small incidents will show the amount of truth there is in these oft-repeated tales.

Just before the birth of my brother Charles, on the 14th September 1859, we moved from Hackney to a little house at Park, near Tottenham, called Elysium Villa; and while we lived here, when my father had to make a journey to the North he was obliged to start from Wood Green station, a distance of about three and a half miles from our house. The only way to get there was to walk—omnibuses there were none, and a cab was out of the question on the score of expense. Mr Bradlaugh had no portmanteau in those days; his books and his clothes were packed in a square tin box, which to the "curious observer"—to use a phrase much favoured by novelists—would have given a hint of his profession, inasmuch as it was uncommonly like a deed box. The maid Kate, assisted by some one else, carried this box from home to the station at Wood Green over night, and my father would get up early in the morning and walk the three and a-half miles to catch the first train to the North. It must be borne in mind that my father did not, like many young men, like walking for walking's sake, and the long walk, followed by a still longer train ride in one of the old comfortless third-class compartments in a slow train, finishing up with a lecture or debate, made a fairly heavy day's work.

Before going farther I must stay to say a word about Kate, because I want to give some idea of the devotion my father inspired at home as well as in the hearts of men who could only judge him by his public acts. Kate came to us from the country,

a girl of sixteen, when I was but a few months old; she stayed with us until our home was broken up and my brother died, in 1870. Many a time her wages were perforce in arrears; and in 1870 she would, as she had done before, have patiently waited for better times and shared with us, had we not been compelled to do without her. Her loyalty was absolute. When we three children were babies she cheerfully bore poverty with us; and well do I remember—as a picture it stands out in my mind, one of my earliest recollections—the carpetless floor and scantily furnished room. In the days when there was arrest for debt she kept the door against the sheriff's officer: when one of Mr Thomson's sad periods of intemperance overwhelmed him, she, with my mother, searched the purlieus of London for him, found him in some poor den, and brought him home to be nursed and cared for. Kate lives to-day, and with unabated loyalty never allows an opportunity to pass of saying a word in praise, or in defence, of her dead but much-loved master.

A letter to my mother (undated, but certainly written early in the sixties) giving some description of one of my father's journeys to Yarmouth, reminds us that the old-fashioned windowless third-class carriage left many things to be desired, and in these days of luxurious travelling such hardships would be thought unendurable:—

"I am safely landed here* with sevenpence in my pocket. It has snowed nearly all the journey, and if it continues I expect all the bloaters will be turned into whitings. The ride was a cold one, for the E. C. R.† parliamentary carriage combined the advantage of ventilation with that of a travelling bath, wind, rain, and snow gaining admission and accompanying us without payment—which was not fair.

"You asked me to write, and I will therefore describe the incidents of the journey. Park to Broxbourne: carriage full, darkness prevailed; Broxbourne: spent 1d. on *Daily Telegraph*, which read to myself lying on the broad of my back, the carriage being more empty; the view was mist in the clouds of snow. Cambridge: bought 3d. of biscuits and a [*Morning*] *Star*, ate one and read the other till I arrived at Ely, with an occasional glance at Buckle on Civilisation. Ely to Norwich: cold, and discontented with my lot in life; Norwich: met Adams and Roberts, talked sweet things about confectionery for ten minutes, then straight on here, where I fulfil my promise of writing you."

* The letter is headed, "Yarmouth, Thursday."

† "Eastern Counties," now "Great Eastern" Railway.

The letter is ornamented with several drawings of himself under the different circumstances indicated in his letter.

The story he also relates in his "Autobiography," "for the encouragement of young propagandists," is a forcible example of the little profit his lectures often brought, and the difficulties his poverty sometimes forced upon him.

"I had," he says, "lectured in Edinburgh in mid-winter; the audience was small, the profits microscopical. After paying my bill at the Temperance Hotel, where I then stayed, I had only a few shillings more than my Parliamentary fare to Bolton, where I was next to lecture. I was out of bed at five on a freezing morning, and could have no breakfast, as the people were not up. I carried my luggage (a big tin box, corded round, which then held books and clothes, and a small black bag), for I could not spare any of my scanty cash for a conveyance or porter. The train from Edinburgh being delayed by a severe snowstorm, the corresponding Parliamentary had left Carlisle long before our arrival. In order to reach Bolton in time for my lecture, I had to book by a quick train, starting in about three-quarters of an hour, but could only book to Preston, as the increased fare took all my money except 4½d. With this small sum I could get no refreshment in the station, but in a little shop in a street outside I got a mug of hot tea and a little hot meat pie. From Preston I got with great difficulty on to Bolton, handing my black bag to the station-master there, as security for my fare from Preston, until the morning. I arrived in Bolton about a quarter to eight; the lecture commenced at eight, and I, having barely time to run to my lodgings, and wash and change, went on to the platform cold and hungry. I shall never forget that lecture; it was in an old Unitarian Chapel. We had no gas, the building seemed full of a foggy mist, and was imperfectly lit with candles. Everything appeared cold, cheerless, and gloomy. The most amusing feature was that an opponent, endowed with extra piety and forbearance, chose that evening to specially attack me for the money-making and easy life I was leading."

Writing in April 1860, he also gives some idea of his profits as an editor and a publisher:—"When," he writes, "I relinquished the editorship of the *Investigator*, I was burdened with a printing debt of nearly £60; this has been reduced a little more than half by contributions, leaving about £26 still due. I have, in addition,

paid out of my own pocket, for Freethought printing, during two years, more than £100, for which I have yet no return. During the last eight months I have been actively engaged in lecturing. . . . . When you learn that at some places I took nothing away, and paid my own expenses, and that at nearly every place I only received the actual profit of my lectures; and when, in addition, you allow a few days for visits to my wife and family, which have been few and far between; and also reckon for more than a week of enforced idleness through ill health, you will perceive that I am not amassing a fortune."

In 1861 he again wrote: "During the past twelve months I have addressed 276 different meetings, four of which each numbered over 5000 persons; eighty of these lectures have involved considerable loss in travelling, hotel expenses, loss of time, etc. I have during the same time held five separate debates, two of these also without remuneration."

It is very likely that even in these early years my father cherished the hope of being able to earn enough by his tongue and his pen to devote himself entirely to that Freethought and political work which he had so much at heart; but as his own words show us, the day for that was not yet come, and the fortune he was accused of amassing existed then, as always, only in the heated imagination of his detractors.

CHAPTER XI.

A CLERICAL LIBELLER.

Some lawsuits in which Mr Bradlaugh was interested brought him into contact with a solicitor named Montague R. Leverson, who had indeed been engaged in the defence of Dr Bernard. The acquaintance thus begun resulted in an arrangement between them in January 1862 that Mr Leverson should give my father his articles. It was agreed that Mr Leverson should pay the £80 stamp duty and all expenses in connection with the articles, and that my father should serve him as clerk for five years at a salary of £150 per annum for the first three years and £200 for the final two. The articles were drawn up and duly stamped on 25th June of the same year. For the convenience of business, my father gave up his house at Park, and went to live at 12 St Helen's Place, Bishopsgate. This connection, which opened so favourably, and gave my father the opportunity, as he thought, of making a settled position in life, lasted only for two years or less. Mr Leverson got into difficulties, and the business was broken up. Vague accusations had been brought against my father for the manner in which he is supposed to have treated Mr Leverson. Nothing definite is stated, but the slanderous "know-all's," who really know nothing, try to make out a case by means of hint and innuendo. With a view of disposing of even such paltry slanders as these, I quote the following letter written in reference to Mr Montague R. Leverson:—

"Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London, W.
"7th January 1867.

"My Dear Sir,—As written words remain when those spoken may be forgotten, I desire to place on record my sense of the kindly interest and alacrity you have recently displayed in your endeavours to serve a person with whom, despite anterior intimate relations, you had a short time previously been on antagonistic terms.

"Your earnest and energetic zeal on a former occasion had commanded

my respect and that of my wife, who witnessed some of your untiring efforts, and I regret that your friendly services have not met their full and due appreciation.

"I feel sure, nevertheless, that should an opportunity occur where your good offices would be required, you would not withhold them.—I remain dear Sir, yours most truly, GEORGE R. LEVERSON.

"Chas. Bradlaugh, Esq."

When Mr Bradlaugh quitted Mr Leverson he also quitted St Helen's Place, and went back to Tottenham to live, where, indeed, my sister and I had remained at a school kept by two maiden ladies during the greater part of the intervening time. He took the house, Sunderland Villa, next door to the one we had previously occupied, and for business purposes he rented an office in the city first at 23 Great St Helen's, and later at 15 and 16 Palmerston Buildings, Old Broad Street. A company was formed called the "Naples Colour Company," of which he was the nominal principal, and in which he was very active. This enterprise arose out of the discovery that iron and platinum were to be found in the sand of the beach at Castellamare, a little place on the coast not far from Naples. From this sand, steel of the finest quality was manufactured, and paint peculiarly suitable for the painting of iron ships, inasmuch as it would not rust. I have a razor in my possession manufactured from this steel, and I remember that while we were at Midhurst my grandfather still had some of this paint, with which he loyally painted hen-coops, troughs, sheds, and every article in his posssession that could be reasonably expected to stand a coat of paint. Everything in connection with the company was done in my father's name: the Italian Government granted the concession in his name; some stock in the Grand Book of Italy, at one time held in his name, was in connection with this company; Foundry, warehouses, and other buildings were raised; there were factories at Granili, Naples, and Hatcham New Town, London; steel and paint, especially the latter, were duly turned out, and were pronounced first-class; but somehow the business was a failure—perhaps partly because those engaged in it may not have been sufficiently versed in the "colour" trade (I do not know that this was so, but think it very probable), and also certainly because of my father's name. I well recollect his telling us how on one occasion a large order came for paint; the paint was duly taken down to the wharf to be shipped, when

at the last moment came a telegram, followed by a letter countermanding the order. In the interval the intending purchaser had learned that the Bradlaugh of the "Naples Colour Company" was also Bradlaugh the Atheist, so, of course, he could not think of doing business with him.

In the city my father also fell into business connection with gentlemen who were concerned in the conduct of financial operations, and he himself took part in negotiating municipal loans, etc. I only remember two incidents in connection with these undertakings: one the loan to the city of Pisa, told by Mr John M. Robertson in his Memoir,* and the other a negotiation he was conducting to supply the Portuguese Government with horses. His business was nearly concluded to his satisfaction when he was recalled by telegram to London. Overend, Gurney & Co. had failed, and "Black Friday" had come; Mr Bradlaugh lost his contract; there was the terrible financial panic, and a fatal blow was struck to my father's business career. Mr Robertson quotes him saying, "I have great faculties for making money, and great faculties for losing it;" and these words were very true.

While at Sunderland Villa Mr Bradlaugh made many friends in the neighbourhood, and interested himself in local affairs. Going to the city every day, he made personal acquaintance with men who travelled daily in the same way, and won their liking and esteem. We children had a large circle of small friends, so that although there was a certain amount of hostility on account of my father's opinions † this did not greatly trouble us; we had

---

* "Once, as a financier, he was intrusted with the negotiation of a loan for the city of Pisa, with some of whose authorities he had become acquainted in some of his various journeys to Italy. His percentage, small in name, was to be considerable in total, on a loan of £750,000. He duly arranged matters with a certain London financier, who thereupon sent off a clerk to Pisa to offer the money at a fraction less than Bradlaugh was to get, provided he got the whole commission. Bradlaugh, however, had been secured in the conduct of the transaction up to a given date. He instantly went to Rothschilds, who allowed no commission, and put the loan in their hands. The other financier thus got nothing; but so did Bradlaugh."—John M. Robertson, "Memoir," pp. xxxvi. xxxvii.

† For example, a lady gave the mistress of the school which we attended the option of sending us away or of losing her daughters. We were not sent away, so the lady withdrew her children rather than have them contaminated by contact with the children of the Atheist.

ample local popularity to counterbalance that. In any case our house would have been sufficient unto itself, for during these years we nearly always had one or two resident guests, besides a constant flow of visitors of all nationalities. Many of our neighbours attended the Church of St Paul's in Park Lane, of which the Rev. Hugh M'Sorley was the vicar; and I am bound to say that Mr M'Sorley at least did not err on the side of "loving his neighbour." He felt the bitterest animosity towards Mr Bradlaugh, which occasionally found some vent in sharp passages at vestry committees,* where, of course, they were almost always in opposition.

* An instance of Mr Bradlaugh's interest in local matters may be found in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Advertiser* for March 1, 1865, which gives a notice of a vestry meeting held on February 20, at which he was present. He is reported as asking for a more detailed account of "Mrs Overend's charity," and the increased value of the land forming part of the property. Several members of the "Waste Land Commission" asked that an inquiry should be made. The Chairman (the vicar) refused to allow the subject to be discussed; but when the report was entered in the minutes, Mr Bradlaugh gave notice that he should move that an inquiry be made.

The next business was to receive a report of the committee appointed by the parishioners in the November before on the matter of the water supply. Mr Delano, chairman of this committee, read the report, which consisted of questions put by the local Board of Health, with correspondence thereon. After criticising the discourtesy of the Board of Health, the chairman agreed that nothing further could be done.

Mr Bradlaugh, however, "said it would not be right to let the subject drop without taking some further notice of it. He thought the Board was bound to act at least courteously towards any of the parishioners having complaints to make of the insufficiency of the water supply. The Board acknowledged this insufficiency, and showed they could give a better supply when a stir was made about the subject. He complained of the unfairness of the Board in refusing all explanation. Not only did they do this, but they added impertinence in characterising him as a new member of the parish. He could not tell who was to blame, but the Board confessed that the supply was irregular, and showed that it was capable of being remedied. In his opinion the Board deserved a vote of censure from the Vestry; they were bound to do their best for those who elected them, and as far as lay in his power he would teach them their duty. He then moved: 'That in the opinion of this meeting the conduct of the Local Board of Health, in refusing to answer the questions of the Committee, is deserving of censure.'" This was seconded by Mr Noble, and there was some discussion, a Mr Kirby rising to defend the action of the Board, to which Mr Bradlaugh replied "in a most caustic speech;" and the motion being put by the chairman, was carried: "twenty-six voting for, and two against it."

The Rev. Mr M'Sorley's animosity at length culminated in an outrageous libel. An article had appeared in *All the Year Round* entitled "Our Suburban Residence," in the nature of a "skit" dealing with Tottenham, in which Mr M'Sorley was alluded to under a very thin disguise. This article was reprinted in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, and Mr M'Sorley, taking it into his wise head that Mr Bradlaugh was the author, wrote the following "appendix" to the reprint, which appeared in the issue for April 28, 1866 :—

"You will have seen that a serious omission has been made in a sketch which appeared in a recent number of *All the Year Round*, edited by C. Dickens, Esq. I crave your indulgence while I endeavour to supply the omission. It would be a crying injustice to posterity if the historian of our little suburban district were to omit one of the celebrities of the place. No doubt he is not much thought of or respected, but that shows his talent is overlooked. He is a great man this : why, our good-natured, genial, and humane vicar must hide his diminished head, when put in the scales and weighed against Swear'em Charley ! and as for the 'bould' Irishman, the Rev. M'Snorter, why, he could not hold a candle to this genius ; and as for the Rev. Chasuble —well, no matter, the least said about him the better, poor man !

"It was stated in the sketch that this parish had its representatives of all sorts of religions, from the Quaker to the Papist, the disciples of George Fox, who bends to no authority, and the disciples of the Pope, who makes all authority bend to him. We had a capital sketch of Churchism, High, Low, and Broad. But the sketcher forgot to add another to his list. Ay, truly, if we have those who are of the High Church, and the Low Church, and the Broad Church, we have some who are of 'No Church.' Why, we have got in our midst the very Coryphæus of infidelity, a compeer of Holyoake, a man who thinks no more of the Bible than if it were an old ballad—Colenso is a babe to him ! This is a mighty man of valour, I assure you—a very Goliath in his way. He used to go 'starring' it in the provinces, itinerating as a tuppenny lecturer on Tom Paine. He has occasionally appeared in our Lecture Hall. He, too, as well as other conjurers, has thrown dust in our eyes, and has made the platform reel beneath the superincumbent weight of his balderdash and blasphemy. He is as fierce against our common Christianity as the Reverend M'Snorter is against Popery—indeed, I think the fiercer of the two. The house he lives in is a sort of 'Voltaire Villa.' The man and his 'squaw' occupy it, united by a bond unblessed by priest or parson. But that has an advantage ; it will enable him to turn his squaw out to grass, like his friend Charles Dickens, when he feels tired of her, unawed by either the ghost or the

successor of Sir Creswell Creswell. Not having any peculiar scruples of conscience about the Lord's Day, the gentleman worships the God of nature in his own way. He thinks 'ratting' on a Sunday with a good Scotch terrier is better than the 'ranting' of a good Scotch divine—for the Presbyterian element has latterly made its appearance among us. Like the homœopathic doctor described in the sketch, this gentleman combines a variety of professions 'rolled into one.' In the provinces he is a star of the first magnitude, known by the name of Moses Scoffer; in the city a myth known to his pals as Swear 'em Charley; and in our neighbourhood he is a cypher—*incog.*, but perfectly understood. He contrives to eke out a tolerable livelihood: I should say that his provincial blasphemies and his City practice bring him in a clear £500 a year at the least. But is it not the wages of iniquity? He has a few followers here, but only a few. He has recently done a very silly act; for he has, all at once, converted 'Voltaire Villa' into a glass house, and the whole neighbourhood can now see into the premises—'the wigwam,' I should say, where he dwells in true Red Indian fashion with his 'squaw.' This is the sketch of one particular character in our suburban residence, which has been omitted. But it is worth all the others noticed in Dickens' paper, and I have no doubt we shall all feel gratified at your allowing it room in your paper."

The article was, of course, unsigned, but it did not take Mr Bradlaugh very long to discover who was the author of this "Appendix:" surely one of the most dastardly libels to which a professed "gentleman" ever put his pen. The immediate steps taken by Mr Bradlaugh to show his appreciation of the Rev. Mr M'Sorley's attentions resulted in the appearance of apologies from both editor and contributor in the issue of the *Herald* for the following week, May 5th. Having given the text of the libel, I now give the retracting words, which are as strong and complete as the falsehoods which preceded them.

"Our Suburban Residence and its 'Appendix.'
"Mr and Mrs Bradlaugh.
No. 1.

"The Editor and Proprietor of this newspaper desires to express his extreme pain that the columns of a journal which has never before been made the vehicle for reflections on private character, should, partly by inadvertence, and partly by a too unhesitating reliance on the authority and good faith of its contributor, have contained last week, in the form of an 'Appendix' to a recent article from *All the Year Round*, a mischievous and unfounded libel upon Mr Charles Bradlaugh.

"That Mr Bradlaugh holds, and fearlessly expounds, theological opinions entirely opposed to those of the editor and the majority of our readers, is undoubtedly true, and Mr Bradlaugh cannot and does not complain that his name is associated with Colenso, Holyoake, or Paine; but that he has offensively intruded those opinions in our lecture hall is NOT TRUE. That his ordinary language on the platform is 'balderdash and blasphemy' is NOT TRUE. That he makes a practice of openly desecrating the Sunday is NOT TRUE. That he is known by the names of 'Moses, Scoffer,' or 'Swear 'em Charley,' is NOT TRUE. Nor is there any foundation for the sneer as to his 'City practice,' or for the insinuations made against his conduct or character as a scholar and a gentleman.

"While making this atonement to Mr Bradlaugh, the Editor must express his unfeigned sorrow that the name of Mrs Bradlaugh should have been introduced into the article in question, accompanied by a suggestion calculated to wound her in the most vital part, conveying as it does a reflection upon her honour and fair fame as a lady and a wife. Mrs Bradlaugh is too well known and too much respected to suffer by such a calumny; but for the pain so heedlessly given to a sensitive and delicate nature the Editor offers this expression of his profound and sincere regret.

"No. 2.

"The author of the 'Appendix' complained of, who is NOT the Editor or Proprietor, or in any way connected with the *Tottenham Herald*, unreservedly adopts the foregoing apology, and desires to incorporate it with his own.

"It is for him bitterly to lament that, stung by allusions in the article from *All the Year Round*, which he erroneously attributed to the pen of Mr Bradlaugh, he allowed his better judgment to give way, and wrote of that gentleman in language which he cannot at all justify, and which he now entirely retracts.

"To Mrs Bradlaugh he respectfully tenders such an apology as becomes a gentleman to offer to a lady he has so greatly wronged. He trusts that the exquisite pain she must have suffered from a harsh allusion will be somewhat mitigated by the public avowal of its absolute injustice. As a wife united to her husband in holy wedlock by the solemn forms of the Church, as a mother of a young family, to whom she sets the proper example of an English lady, she is entitled to reparation from one whose only excuse is that he wrote of her in ignorance and haste, while writing of her husband under irritation and excitement.

"The writer of the libel has only to add that he has addressed to Mr Bradlaugh a private letter bearing his proper signature, and avowing, while he laments, the authorship of the offending article; and he

begs to offer his thanks to Mr Bradlaugh for the generous forbearance which declines to exact the publication of the writer's name, from considerations which will be patent to most of the readers of this journal."

These apologies were accepted in a few generous words by Mr Bradlaugh :—

"On my own behalf, and that of my wife, I am content with these apologies. To have accepted less would have shown my disregard of her honour and my own. To have required more would have been to punish with too great severity those whose own frank avowals show that they acted rather with precipitancy than with 'malice prepense.'

"(Signed) CHARLES BRADLAUGH."

If I could believe that Mr M'Sorley *had* frankly—to repeat Mr Bradlaugh's word—repented in fact, as well as in appearance, I should pass this libel now with but slight allusion, and have considered myself bound by my father's promise not to make the writer's name public.* In the immediate locality it was impossible that the authorship of such an astounding concoction should long remain secret, and for long afterwards Mr M'Sorley's name was bandied about with small jests amongst the irreverent youngsters of the neighbourhood. The apology was made under considerable pressure : members of the congregation threatened to leave the Church, a lawsuit loomed in the distance, and a horsewhipping in the near future.† "This fellow," said Mr Bradlaugh,‡ speaking thirteen years later, and still withholding the name, "I compelled to retract every word he had uttered, and to pay £100, which, after deducting costs, was divided amongst various charitable institutions. The reverend libeller wrote me an abject letter begging me not to ruin his prospects in the Church by publishing his name. I consented, and he has since repaid my mercy by

* In 1872 Mr Bradlaugh had occasion to address a letter in the *National Reformer* to the Rev. Mr M'Sorley, dealing with a sermon of his published in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Advertiser*, but he did not make the slightest allusion to the clergyman's former conduct. Mr M'Sorley died in 1892.

† I remember that some one, I know not whom, put the horsewhip in the hall in readiness, and this impressed upon the minds of us children the dreadful depths of Mr M'Sorley's depravity ! Our father never said a harsh word or raised his hand in anger to one of us, and we knew that the person must be very bad indeed if the possibility of a whipping could be even contemplated !

‡ *The Weekly Dispatch*, November 16, 1879.

losing no opportunity of being offensive. He is a prominent contributor to the *Rock*, and a fierce ultra-Protestant."

So much for the bitter lament and frank avowal of an ordained minister of the Church of England!

It is an open question which was the worse of the two—the Rev. John Graham Packer or the Rev. Hugh M'Sorley. I am inclined to think that the latter carried off the palm, although his malignancy recoiled upon himself, whilst Mr Packer's took such terrible effect. In any case a perusal of Mr M'Sorley's "Appendix" will convince the reader, if indeed any need convincing, that Mr Packer was not—as has lately been the fashion to assume—the only clergyman who has striven to injure my father's character.

CHAPTER XII.

TOTTENHAM.

Our house at Sunderland Villa was what I suppose would be called an eight-roomed house. It comprised four bedrooms, two sitting-rooms, and a little room built out over the kitchen, which was Mr Bradlaugh's "den" or study. There was a garden in the rear communicating by a private way with "The Grove," a road running at right angles to Northumberland Park, in which our house was situated; and at the bottom of this garden, when things looked very prosperous indeed, some stables were built. There was to be stalled the longed-for horse which was to take my father to the City every day; but before the stables were quite completed Black Friday came, and with it vanished all these entrancing dreams. The building indeed remained, but merely as a playhouse for us children, or to afford an occasional lodging for a friend (the coachman's quarters being well and snugly built), and also, I fear, as a "good joke" to the neighbourhood.

We usually had one or more dogs, belonging to the various members of the family, for we were all fond of animals, and any big ones were kept in the paved forecourt of the stables. At one time there were three dwellers in the court, but these ultimately thinned down to one, the dog Bruin, my father's special favourite. Bruin was part retriever and part St Bernard, a fine dog to look at, and wonderfully clever. Mr Bradlaugh was never weary of relating anecdotes of his intelligence and sagacity. From his kennel in the court Bruin's chain-range covered the garden gate, and with him there no bolt or lock was necessary, for while with friends he was the mildest and gentlest of dogs, with strangers or suspicious persons he was truly formidable. He made no unnecessary show of what he could do; he quietly watched the person until he was well within his reach, and then hurled himself at his throat. This I once saw. He was devoted to my father, and with him almost perfectly docile and obedient. And when, in 1870, Mr Bradlaugh

had to part with him, losing Bruin was by no means the smallest grief at a time when there was little else but sadness and sorrow.

At St. Helen's Place Mr James Thomson (B. V.) had shared our home, and he again lived with us for some years at Sunderland Villa. The acquaintance which sprang up between them during Mr Bradlaugh's army experiences in Ireland had soon ripened into warm friendship.

When my father quitted the service they kept up a close correspondence, and many a time have I heard my mother lament that Mr Thomson's "beautiful letters" had been destroyed. When Mr Thomson also left the army and came to London at the end of 1862, he came to my father, who at once held out a helping hand to him. In 1863 Mr Bradlaugh obtained for him the appointment of Secretary to the Polish Committee, but his inherited curse of intemperance seized upon him, and at a crucial moment he disappeared.* On May 29th Mr W. J. Linton wrote from Ambleside:—

---

* Mr W. E. Adams speaks of this matter in his recollections of my father, from which I have already quoted on page 68. "I think it has been said," he remarks, "that Mr Bradlaugh did not do the best he could for James Thomson, the author of 'The City of Dreadful Night.' My own testimony on this subject may not be of much account, but I happen to know that Mr Bradlaugh for many years maintained Thomson as a member of his own family; sometimes finding him employment in his own office, at other times getting him situations elsewhere. When the Polish Revolution of 1862 broke out, a committee was formed in London to assist the insurgents. I was appointed secretary of that committee. But in 1863 it became necessary that I should resign in order to accept an appointment in Newcastle. Mr Bradlaugh asked me to do what I could to obtain for Thomson the succession to the office. It was mainly on Mr Bradlaugh's strong and urgent recommendation that the committee selected him. I transferred to him all the books, documents, correspondence, etc., much of it of a very interesting and valuable character. Although I endeavoured, both in Manchester and in Newcastle, where I visited some of the leading politicians, to form branches of the central committee in London, I ceased all active participation in the movement. It was naturally expected, of course, that Thomson would do all that had been hitherto done by me, and indeed, from his superior qualifications, a great deal more. A few weeks after I had been located in Newcastle, however, a letter was placed in my hands from the late Peter Alfred Taylor, who was chairman of the Polish Committee, asking whether I could tell him where James Thomson could be found, since he had not been at the office for many days, and had left the affairs of the committee in a disordered condition. Poor Thomson, as it turned out, had been overtaken by one of those periodical attacks of

"Dear Bradlaugh,—The enclosed from Taylor. I send it to you knowing no other way of getting at Thomson, and wishful not to throw over any one spoken kindly of by you. But for myself I would not stand a second utter neglect of this kind. However, it rests with Taylor.

"After some trouble about Thomson, he might at least have written to me in the first instance, or to Taylor now, to account even for 'illness'—which I begin to doubt.

"*I* only asked him for a daily paper, which would have satisfied me of his daily attention. I have had *three* since I left. Row him, please! —Yours ever, very hard worked, W. J. Linton."

Enclosure.

"House of Commons, May 28, 1863.

"Dear Linton,—Do you know Thomson's address or how to get at it? He has not been at S. Street this week, and everything is going to the D——l.—Yours ever, P. A. Taylor."

These fits of intemperance, comparatively rare at first, unhappily became more and more frequent. While Mr Thomson lived with us when he came back after one of these attacks—or was brought back, for indeed it usually happened that some friend searched for him and brought him home despite himself—he was nursed and cared for until he was quite himself again, for it often happened

---

dipsomania which ultimately resulted in his death. It may readily be imagined how much this collapse must have disturbed and distressed Mr Bradlaugh. But it does not appear that it made any difference whatever in his helpful friendship for the unfortunate poet; for some years afterwards I still found Thomson a member of Mr Bradlaugh's family and the occupant of an important post in the business which Mr Bradlaugh was then conducting. These are matters of personal knowledge. I may add that Mr Bradlaugh, whenever Thomson was the subject of conversation between us, always spoke of him in the tenderest and most affectionate terms. Even when, as I understand, he had been compelled to part company with his unfortunate friend, no word of censure or complaint ever passed Mr Bradlaugh's lips in my hearing.

"The kindness which Mr Bradlaugh had shown to poor Thomson was shown in a modified degree to me too. I should regard myself as one of the most ungrateful creatures living if I ever forgot the kindly help and sympathy I received from him in a most trying period of my life. For many months during this period, when I was begging some brother man to give me leave to toil, I breakfasted at his house nearly every morning (and a breakfast was a matter of some consequence to me then), in order to learn what had come of inquiries which he was day by day making on my behalf, inquiries which eventually resulted in a service of the highest value."

that he was bruised and wounded, and unfit to go out for some days.

Although he failed so miserably in his secretary's work, Mr Bradlaugh gave him a post in his own office, and encouraged him to write for the *National Reformer*. He had already written a few scattered articles, first for the *Investigator* in 1859, and then for the *National Reformer*. In the latter his writings ultimately extended over a period of fifteen years, commencing in 1860, and ending in the summer of 1875. His contributions range from the smallest review notice of some pamphlets written by Frederic Harrison, to his great and remarkable poem of "The City of Dreadful Night." Those who think most highly of this wonderful work admit that there was no other publisher in London who would have published it, but at the same time they give no credit to my father for discerning genius to which every one else was then blind; on the contrary, they join in the suggestion that Mr Thomson was in some way ill-used by Mr Bradlaugh, although *how* they do not deign to tell. Most of "B.V.'s" writings to the *National Reformer* were done in the years 1865, 1866, 1867, the first half of 1868, and second half of 1869, 1870, 1871, 1874, and the early months of 1875. In the other years his contributions were more scattered, but no year is entirely without.

While he lived with us at Sunderland Villa, Mr Thomson was just one of the family, sharing our home life in every particular. He was a favourite with us all; my father loved him with a love that had to bear many a strain, and we children simply adored him. Sometimes in the evenings he, with my mother for a partner, my father with Miss Lacey (a frequent inmate of our house), would form a jovial quartet at whist; and many were the jokes and great the fun on these whist evenings. On Sundays, if my father were at home, he and Mr Thomson would take us children and Bruin for a walk over the Tottenham Marshes to give Bruin a swim in the Lea; or if my father were away lecturing, as was too frequently the case, then Mr Thomson would take us for a long ramble to Edmonton to see Charles Lamb's grave, or maybe across the fields to Chingford. In the winter time, when the exigencies of the weather kept us indoors, he would devote his Sunday afternoons to us, and tell us the most enchanting fairy tales it was ever the lot of children to listen to. One snowy night my father and he came to fetch my sister and me home from a Christmas party. They

had to carry us, for the snow was deep. They took us out of the house with due regard to propriety; but they had not got far before they were all too conscious of the weight of their respective burdens, so they set us down in a fairly clear spot, and then re-adjusted us "pick-a-back." There was much joking over our weight, and we heartily joined in the laugh and enjoyed the jests at our expense, and over and above all the notion of being aided and abetted by our elders in doing something so shocking as a "pick-a-back" ride through the streets. These were delightful, happy times to us at least, and, in spite of all his cares, not unhappy for my father. He had youth and health and hope and courage, a friend he loved, and children he was ever good to. I feel indeed as though my pen must linger over these small trifles, over these merry moods and happy moments, and I am loth to put them aside for sadder, weightier matters.

Or the two would sit in my father's little "den" or study, and smoke. Mr Bradlaugh smoked a great deal at this time, and "B.V." was an inveterate smoker; the one had his cigar, and the other his pipe; and while the smoke slowly mounted up and by degrees so filled the room that they could scarce see each other's faces across the table, they would talk philosophy, politics, or literature. I can see them now, in some ways a strangely assorted pair, as they sat in that little room lined with books; at the far side of the table the poet and dreamer, with his head thrown back and with the stem of his pipe never far from his lips, his face almost lost in the blue clouds gently and lazily curling upwards; and here, near the fireplace, my father, essentially a man to whom to think, to plan, was to *do*, sitting in careless comfort in his big uncushioned oaken chair, now taking frequent strong draws at his cigar, transforming the dull ash into a vigorous point of light, and again laying it aside to die into dull ash once more, whilst he argued a point or drew himself up to write. How often and how vividly that once familiar scene rises before my closed eyes! Of course, whilst with us, Mr Thomson had the use of my father's little library as his own, and many of the books still bear the traces of his reading in the pencilled notes.

During the Carlist War, in 1873, Mr Bradlaugh obtained for his friend an appointment to go to Spain as special correspondent to a New York paper; but alas! he was taken "ill" whilst about his duties, wrote irregularly and infrequently, and as a climax

wrote three lines describing an important event when three columns were expected. He was consequently recalled, and when he got back my father found, to his additional vexation, that he (Mr Thomson) had lost the Colt's revolver which he had lent him. It was an old friend to Mr Bradlaugh; he had had it for many years, and it had served him well.

My father's anger was, as usual, short lived; and in the next year he published "B. V.'s" "City of Dreadful Night," and thenceforward gave him regular work on the *National Reformer*. But he was unhappily one not to be relied upon; and on a special occasion when he was left with the responsibility of the paper he disappeared and left it, as far as he was concerned, to come out as best it could. At length, in 1875, in spite of all my father's forbearance and affection, Mr Thomson for some reason felt injured; but whatever might have been his grievances, they were in fact utterly baseless. Mr Thomson resented his supposed injury by an open insult, and from that moment the friendship between these two was dead. On Mr Thomson's side it seemed turned to hatred and bitter animosity, and he said against my father some of the most bitter things possible for a man to say. The memory of all past love and kindness seemed washed out and drowned in a whirl of evil passions. My father was deeply wounded, and at first, for some year or two, never voluntarily mentioned his old friend's name; but when the first soreness had passed he spoke of him, seldom, it is true, but with a certain tenderness, and always as "poor Thomson." We found amongst things long put away a silver cup won by Mr Thomson and inscribed with his name; we asked my father what we should do with it. "Send it to him, my daughters; I dare say he needs it, poor fellow." And indeed we heard afterwards that it soon found its way to the pawnshop. It was characteristic of my father that he said nothing to us, his daughters, of his quarrel with one to whom he knew we were greatly attached; we heard of it from others not too friendly to my father. We, naturally and without a word, although not without great grief, ranged ourselves on our father's side, and met Mr Thomson as a stranger; we felt that he was grateful for our sacrifice, but he neither uttered a syllable of approval or comment, nor did he ever attempt to sway us by sign or word.

Although our home was small, the doors were made to open very

wide. Relations and friends, all who stood in need of kindness and hospitality, seemed to find their way here. My father's youngest sister Harriet, after leaving the Orphan Asylum in which she had been placed at her father's death, lived with us for a long time. She was a brilliant, handsome girl, yet bearing a strong resemblance to my father. I can always picture her as she stood one 30th of April, awaiting the child guests who were to come to make merry over my sister's birthday. Standing against the wall I can see her tall, well-proportioned figure, robed in one of the sprigged muslin gowns of those days, the short sleeves and low neck of the time showing her fine arms and shoulders. I see her face with its fair complexion, alive with vivacity and the warm glow of health, her light brown hair, her laughing mouth and eyes—eyes which were certainly not of the "angel" order, but whose fire and flash gave some warning of the unrestrained temper within. Poor Harriet! this same temper was her own undoing. Driven by it she married badly, in every sense of the word, dragged through a few years of miserable existence, and eventually died in the Fulham Hospital, of smallpox, when it fell to my father to discharge the funeral expenses—such was the poverty of her own home. I have heard that stories have been told and even preached from a public platform of her "deathbed conversion," but this is only one of the common pious frauds. Her illness was quite unexpected, and lasted only a few days, none of her family, except her husband, knowing of it until after she was dead. Apart from that point and the nature of her illness, which would somewhat stand in the way of much visiting, I am not aware that she ever called herself anything but a Christian. She was brought up in that religion, and she was not interfered with whilst with us.

Here, also, Mr Bradlaugh's younger brother found a resting place and tendance after illness; but as I shall have occasion to speak of him later, I will for the moment pass him with a mere mention.

Others, too, more than I can count, found their way to that small house in Northumberland Park. Some were nursed there, some did their courtship there, and some were even married from there. In the meantime, who can tell how many were the visitors to that little study at the back, over the kitchen? Alas! I can only remember the names of a few. There were Frenchmen like Talandier, Le Blanc, Elisée Reclus, Alphonse Esquiros; Italians and Englishmen working for Mazzini and Garibaldi; Irish politicals

like General Cluseret and Kelly; and there was Alexander Herzen, for whom my father had a great admiration, and whom he always counted as a friend. These, whose names are sometimes joined to faces, and others, faces without names, lie indistinctly in the dim far-back memory of my childhood.

I was here about to break off and take up again the thread of the story of Mr Bradlaugh's public work, but it occurs to me that I have said little about my father's treatment of us, his children, and of our early education. There is so little to say, and certainly so little of importance to linger over, that I should have passed on to other matters were it not for the imaginings of those who make it their business to spread false statements concerning Mr Bradlaugh, even on such a purely personal matter as his children's education.

My father was away from home so much that ordinarily we saw him very little, and my earliest recollection of him is at St. Helen's Place. One evening in particular seems to stand out in my memory. The room was alight and warm with gas and fire; and at one end of the table, covered with papers, sat my father. I suppose that we were romping and noisy, and interfered with his work, for he turned towards us and said in grave tones, which I can always hear, "Is it not time you little lassies went to bed?" A trifling incident, but it shows that at that time he was obliged to do his thinking and writing in the common room in the midst of his family, and the term "little lassies" was a characteristic one with him. When we were quite little, if he had anything serious to say to us, it was his "little lassies" he talked to; as we grew older it was "my daughters," and what he had to say always seemed to have an additional emphasis by the use of the special, yet tender term, almost entirely reserved for serious occasions. In the morning, when he left home, we three children always assembled for the "goodbye" kiss; after that we seldom saw him until the next day. If, however, he was home in the evenings while we were still up, we used to sit by his elbow while he played whist or chess, and after the game was over he would so carefully explain his own moves, and perhaps the faults of his partner or his opponents, that before I was twelve years old I could play whist as well as I can to-day, and chess a great deal better, merely through watching his play, and paying attention to his comments.

Broxbourne was then his favourite place for fishing; it was easily reached from Northumberland Park, and there were in those days good fish in the Lea. He and the proprietor of the fishing-right were very good friends; and sometimes when it grew too dark to fish, he would wind up his day with a pleasant game at billiards before taking the train home. He generally took us children with him if the day was fine, and these were indeed red-letter days for us. We were on our honour not to get into any mischief, and, with the one restriction that we were not to make a noise close to the water, we were allowed a perfect, glorious liberty. Sometimes we too would fish, and my father would give us little lines and floats and hooks, and with an impromptu rod stolen from the nearest willow or ash tree we would do our best to imitate our superior. But my brother was the only one who showed great perseverance in this respect; my sister and I soon tired of watching the placid float on the sparkling water, and sought other amusements. At Carthagena Weir my father would "make it right" with old Brimsden the lock-keeper, and he would rig us up a rope swing on which he would make a seat of a most wonderful sheep-skin; or there were a score of ways in which we amused ourselves, for there was no one to say, "Don't do this" or "Don't do that." We could roll in the grass and get our white muslin dresses grass-green, jump in the ditch and fill our shoes with mud, anything so long as we enjoyed ourselves and did no harm. Whether it was the feeling of freedom and the being made our own judges of right or wrong, I do not know, but I do not remember one occasion on which we were rebuked either by the lenient guardian with us or by the stricter one when we got home again—for, of course, as is mostly the way with women, my mother was much more particular about the "proprieties" than my father; and had he brought us home in a *very* tumbled, muddy condition, our fishing expeditions would have been less frequent.

As to our early education, our father did the best he could for us; but his means were small, and the opportunities for schooling twenty-five and thirty years ago were not such as they are to-day. My sister and I, first alone and then with my brother, were sent to a little school taught by two maiden ladies; the boys being taught upstairs, and the girls in a room below. At this school, as always, although the contrary has been stated, we were withdrawn from religious instruction, but the Misses Burnell did not always obey

this injunction: if a bogie was wanted to frighten us with, then "God" was trotted out. I remember on one occasion, when I suppose I had been naughty, Miss Burnell, pointing to the sky, told me that God was watching me from above and could see all I did. Childlike, I took this literally, though I suppose with the proverbial "grain of salt," for I leaned out of the window and gazed up into the sky to see for myself this "God" who was always watching my actions. It was just dusk, and it happened to be a time when some comet was visible. When I looked out and saw this brilliant body lighting up the darkness all about it, I was convinced that *this* was the "eye of God" of which Miss Burnell had been talking, and hastily drew in my head again to get out of his sight! But as at home we had no mysterious Being either to fear (because that seems the first impression generally made upon sensitive children) or to love, this awful Eye blazing away overhead merely left a vague feeling of uneasiness behind, which time and healthier thought effaced. My little brother was soon taken from this school and sent to a boarding-school, where he remained only a few months, as it was unsatisfactory; he was also over-walked, which resulted in laming him for a time. The master who took the boys out for walking exercise could not have been of an exactly cheerful disposition, for at the time of the dreadful ice accident in 1867, when forty persons were drowned, he marched the boys to Regent's Park to see the dead bodies taken out of the water. It was a terrible sight for little boys to see; and as my little brother was only just over seven years old, the remembrance of these rows of dead bodies made an indelible impression upon his mind. He was then sent to some good friends at Plymouth, Mr and Mrs John Williamson, and while he grew well and strong in the sea breezes, he went to school with their son. On coming home again, he was sent to Mr John Grant, schoolmaster in the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards—then a friend of Mr Thomson's, and so of my father's—who took him as a private pupil. My sister and I learned French of different French refugees who frequented our house, and I must do them the justice to say that our French was both a great deal better taught and learned than our English. My father used to hold sudden examinations at unstated times of our progress in the French language, especially if he happened to come across a *franc* piece, reminiscent of his journeys to the Continent. This *franc* was to

be the reward of the one who answered best; but somehow I was so stupid and desperately nervous that I never once won the prize: my sister always carried it off in triumph.

Never during the whole of our childhood did my father once raise his hand against us, never once did he speak a harsh word. We *were* whipped, for my mother held the old-fashioned, mistaken notion that to "spare the rod" was to "spoil the child;" but when scolding or whipping failed to bring obedience, the culprit was taken to that little study; there a grave look and a grave word brought instant submission. But it seldom went beyond the threat of being taken there, for we loved him so that we could not bear him even to know when we were naughty.

I feel that much of this may well seem very trivial to those who read my book, but my excuse for dwelling so long on such details is that even the most ordinary incidents in my father's history have been misstated and distorted. I take my opportunity whilst I may, for many lie cold in the grave, and mine is now almost the only hand which can nail down the wretched calumnies which strike at such small personal matters as these.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER."

Those who have travelled with me thus far will have noticed that the story of Mr Bradlaugh's public work is carried down to 1860, just prior to the inauguration of the *National Reformer*. This I thought would be a good point at which to break off and look at what his private life and home surroundings had been during that time; and the account of this I have brought down to about the year 1870. I will now retrace my steps a little and go back to 1860 to take up again the narrative of my father's public work, and to tell of the starting, carrying on, and vicissitudes of the *National Reformer*, of the stormy lecturing times when Mr Bradlaugh delivered twenty-three or more lectures in one month, travelling between Yarmouth and Dumfries to do it and home again with perhaps less money in his pocket than when he started. Italy, Ireland, the Lancashire Cotton Famine, the Reform League, the General Election of 1868, these and other matters of more or less importance will bring us again to the year 1870. That year brought with it such important events touching both the private and public life of Mr Bradlaugh that it made, as it were, a break in his life, and marked a new era in his career.

The Sheffield Freethinkers, as I said a few pages back, almost adopted the young "Iconoclast" as their own. In him they found a bold, able, and untiring advocate of the opinions they cherished; in them he, in return, found full appreciation of his efforts, kind friends and enthusiastic co-workers. This union had not existed long before it resolved itself into a practical form —the promulgation of the *National Reformer*. The initiation of the idea came from Mr Bradlaugh, who naturally sighed after his lost *Investigator*; but as neither he nor any one of these Yorkshire friends was sufficiently wealthy to take the sole risk of starting and running a newspaper, a committee of Sheffield, Bradford, and Halifax men formed a Company and issued a prospectus, which

was inserted in the *Reasoner* of February 12, 1860.* This original Prospectus is very interesting, and a perusal of it will show how closely, except on one or two matters of detail which

---

* The Prospectus of the *Reformer*, as it appeared in the *Reasoner*, was as follows :—

"Reformer Newspaper Company, Limited. Capital, £1000, in 2000 shares of 10s. each. This Company is to be formed for the purpose of issuing a weekly newspaper, price twopence, to be entitled the *Reformer*, of the size of the *Manchester Guardian*, folded so as to form eight pages. It will advocate advanced Liberal opinions, on Social, Political, Theological, and Scientific questions, and will permit free discussion on every statement made, or opinion advanced in its columns, or upon any question of general importance. The present platform of political views will be mainly that advocated by the Northern Reform Union, but every phase of the political question shall have free and unreserved treatment, and the most partial Tory will be allowed to answer the views of the Editor, as well as the most extreme Republican, the promoters being of opinion that no one man holds the whole truth, but that it permeates from one extreme to another, and can only be found by a complete ventilation and examination of each man's views. On social science, the promoters intend specially to watch the conduct of the Social Science League, reviewing the course taken by its leading men, and illustrating the general views enunciated at its meetings. The newspaper will contain full reports of co-operative news, meetings and proceedings of trade societies, and co-operative progress throughout the country. It will also contain articles illustrating the connection between physiological and psychological phenomena, and illustrating new scientific discoveries, examining and explaining the various theories in connection with animal magnetism, phrenology, etc., treating fully on the important ground recognised under the title of Political Economy. The present platform, of theological advocacy, will be that of antagonism to every known religious system, and especially to the various phases of Christianity taught and preached in Britain ; but every one—Churchman, Dissenter, or anti-theologian—shall have full space to illustrate his own views. The paper will also contain all the important news of the week, summary of Parliamentary debates, reviews of books, etc. etc. ; special law and police intelligence ; original poetry, etc. The Company will be conducted by a committee of management, appointed annually by the general body of shareholders. The committee will have the whole financial control of the paper, and will have the appointment of the Editor. The Editor for the first six months will be 'Iconoclast,' who will be continued in that office if satisfaction be given to the committee of management. A number of well-known writers have already associated themselves with that gentleman in order to make the pages of the *Reformer* worthy of general approbation."

It will be noted that here the paper is called the *Reformer* simply, but in the first advertisement which appeared after the publication of its policy, it was announced as the *National Reformer*.

have necessarily altered with the times, the programme of the latter day *National Reformer* adhered to that issued thirty-four years ago. A careful comparison of the policy embodied in this Prospectus with the policy of the paper up to January 1891 will entirely disprove the various assertions of modifications airily made by many persons; by some carelessly, these never having troubled to make themselves acquainted with the facts; by others wilfully, regardless of the truth within their knowledge.

The arrangements for the paper were completed, and announcements concerning it made, when Mr Joseph Barker returned to England from America. His coming was heralded by a flourish of trumpets—literary trumpets, that is—receptions were arranged to welcome him, and there was evidently a widespread notion that Joseph Barker was a very great man indeed. It is difficult for us to-day, having before us his whole public career, with its kaleidoscopic changes of front, to realise the enthusiasm which his name provoked in 1860. But be that as it may, it is quite evident that at that time his reputation stood high amongst English Freethinkers; and, in an evil hour, Mr Bradlaugh, thinking that the co-operation of such a man would be of great advantage to the cause he had at heart, suggested to the Sheffield committee that Mr Barker should be invited to become co-editor with himself. The suggestion was readily adopted, and all future announcements concerning the *National Reformer* contained the two names, Joseph Barker and "Iconoclast," as "editors for the first six months."

The issue of the first number was promised for April 8th (1860), but apparently there was some little difficulty in getting it under weigh, and it was not until the following Saturday,* April 14th, that the new venture was fairly launched. According to the arrangements made between the committee of management and the editors, Mr Joseph Barker edited the first half (four pages), "Iconoclast" the second; and in this last half were put all the parliamentary, co-operative, and society reports, announcement of lectures, and advertisements. I conclude that after a few numbers, Mr Bradlaugh found all these reports greatly curtailed the space available for original articles by himself or his contributors, for very soon the Parliamentary reports were abandoned, and criticism of measures before the Legislature, written either by himself

* The paper was at first dated on the Saturday.

or by "Caractacus," were substituted. The "original" poetry, I remark, was mainly confined to Mr Barker's side (I use the word "original" because it appeared in the Prospectus); and even there the poetic seed seems to have taken some time to germinate, for until the tenth number only two or three stray shoots appeared; with "No. 10," however, it suddenly blossomed into upwards of a column of verses. These verses are from the pens of Charles Mackay, John G. Saxe, Longfellow, and Richard Howitt, and it is a heavy demand upon us to believe that they made their first appearance under the auspices of Mr Barker in the *National Reformer*. After this number there was seldom an issue without some verse—"original" or otherwise. There is one small matter which has amused me immensely in connection with the *National Reformer* (and also with the *Reasoner*), that is, the enthusiastic advocacy of the Turkish Bath. A casual observer, say a Hindu or a Confucian, coming to these papers with an entirely unbiassed mind, might well imagine that the Turkish Bath was a mainstay of Secularism, such is the ardour with which its merits are put forward. At each town visited by the different editors, wherever there was a Turkish Bath, the bath is also visited, reported upon, and if possible, commended in their respective papers. Thus, in the first number of the *National Reformer*, Mr Barker winds up an account of "My lecturing tour" by a detailed description of the bath at Keighley, and refers more briefly to those he revelled in at Sheffield, Huddersfield, Rochdale, Stockport, and Bradford. He seems to have been a new convert, and on that ground perhaps may be excused the eagerness which carried him to such flights in his description as to record the momentous fact that the drying sheet was "fringed with red." While Mr Barker thus describes in his half of the paper, "Iconoclast" in the four pages under his charge devotes two-thirds of a column to an article on "Cleanliness," in which he also extols the Turkish Bath, but with the calmness and matter-of-fact manner of an old frequenter. Mr Jagger of Rochdale and Mr Maxfield of Huddersfield are especially and discriminatingly praised for the comfort and cleanliness of their arrangements. We are all tolerably familiar with the proverb "Cleanliness comes next to Godliness," but any one reading the Freethought papers of thirty odd years ago would be compelled to admit that it took a very front place in the principles of Secularism then.

As a matter of course, Mr Bradlaugh addressed some "First words" to his readers; from this I will detach two sentences, and two only; and these because they embody, in forcible language, truths as sound to-day as at the moment when they were written. Let us unite against the clergy, he urges upon his Freethinking readers, for "the Bible is the great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be more free to appreciate facts instead of faiths." Then in praising the efforts at Co-operation at Rochdale, he adds: "I would say to the men of other towns, do not strike against your masters, ye who are servants, but combine to serve one another in co-operative associations, which will enable you to employ and elevate yourselves, and in time will strike the words 'master and servant' out of our vocabulary."

The second number of the *National Reformer* did not appear until a month later, the third came out on June 2nd, and with that commenced the weekly issue. With the exception of a few letters and occasional extracts, the whole of which rarely filled more than two or three columns, Mr Joseph Barker's half was entirely written by himself, and the initials "J. B." dotted all over the four pages become so monotonous that the sight of another signature gives quite a relief to the eye. The most prominent contributors to Iconoclast's section were "Caractacus," "G. R.," and Mr John Watts. When the paper was nothing more than a project, Mr Bradlaugh spoke of it to his friend Mr W. E. Adams, who was then living at Manchester. He asked the author of the "Tyrannicide" pamphlet to write articles for the new paper, but Mr Adams had so modest an opinion of his own abilities that he hesitated to consent. But consent he at length did; an article from his pen upon "Reform" appeared in the first number, and once having made the plunge, he became a regular weekly contributor. The first contribution was signed "W. E. A.," but after that Mr Adams wrote under the signature of "Caractacus," and the eloquence of his articles impeaching the oppressor, or pleading the cause of the oppressed, quicken the blood in one's veins to-day, although the men and causes which inspired his pen are now more than half forgotten. G. R.'s first article on the population doctrines appeared in the fourth number, and after that he wrote fairly frequently for the *National Reformer*. In number sixteen, the printer transferred nine "make-up" paragraphs—sent by Mr Bradlaugh to fill up

any vacant corners in his section—to Mr Barker's half. The paragraphs were sufficiently interesting in their way, but, after the manner of such paragraphs, contained no very startling doctrines, nor expressed any very extraordinary sentiment. The first read "Kindness to animals promotes humanity;" the second gave some tonnage statistics; the third was upon persecutions, urging "that he who kills for a faith must be weak, that he who dies for a faith must be strong;" the other paragraphs were quotations from Thackeray, Wendell Phillips, Senior, Mansell's Bampton Lectures, Theodore Parker and Ruskin. Such was the effect of these harmless looking extracts upon Mr Barker, however, that he thought it necessary to specially address his readers on September 8th (in No. 17), publicly repudiating the sentiments as "foolish or false," and specially selecting for condemnation the maxim on kindness to animals! This is the first intimation the public have of the "rift within the lute," and one is immediately driven to the conclusion that a man who could publicly repudiate, in the brusque language used by Mr Barker, such a trifling matter as this, must have been very anxious to pick a quarrel with his colleague, no matter how slight the grounds. As a matter of course, Mr Bradlaugh was obliged in the next number to explain that the paragraphs had been used by the printer to fill up what would otherwise have been a blank space in Mr Barker's half. "It was done," he said, "without my knowledge, but I can hardly say against my wish," and then, naturally enough, he proceeded to defend or explain the sentiments expressed in them. This matter, small in itself, makes it fairly evident that Mr Barker was a man exceedingly difficult to deal with; and his entire lack of self-restraint is shown in his eagerness to display to the public the smallest of his grievances, even as against his co-editor, with whom one would have imagined it would have been to his interest to at least appear on friendly terms, since it directly involved the welfare of the paper.

For some time after this, things went on quietly between the two editors, each pursuing the even tenor of his way. But this seeming tranquillity did not extend far below the surface. Mr Barker expressed to certain persons his regret at having associated himself with Mr Bradlaugh, and his determination not to continue long as co-editor. Of course, all this was reported to Mr Bradlaugh, although he allowed it to pass quite unnoticed.

There were for the moment no more outbursts of repudiation in the *National Reformer*, still the paper was very curious reading, and it grew more and more curious each week. As Mr Bradlaugh himself wrote at a later stage: "The points of difference between myself and Mr Barker are many. He professes now to be a Theist. For eight years, at least, I have been an Atheist. I am for the Manhood Suffrage. Mr Barker is against it. I hold the doctrines of John Stuart Mill on Political Economy. Mr Barker thinks the advocacy of such opinions vile and immoral. Mr Barker thinks Louis Napoleon a good and useful man. I believe the Emperor of the French to be the most clever and unscrupulous rascal in the world." These were a few of the more prominent points of difference, and they seemed to increase and magnify week by week, although my father's Malthusian advocacy and his hatred of Louis Napoleon were made the principal grounds of friction. All Mr Bradlaugh's contributors were apparently obnoxious to Mr Barker. He fell foul of "Caractacus" on the subjects of the American War, Garibaldi, and the Emperor of the French; "G. R." was attacked for his economical doctrines in the most unreserved language; and Mr John Watts he opposed on private grounds. These differences of opinion broke out once more into open hostility in Mr Barker's half. In No. 47, "Caractacus," in an article on the dangers to the rights of free speech, called upon "all honest and liberal men" to stand by Iconoclast and Mr Barker in their efforts "to maintain the very greatest of our public rights." In the same number, and on the opposite page, Mr Joseph Barker protested against the reference to himself. He had seen the article before it went to press, and had he mentioned his objection, the words would have been erased; but apparently that was too ordinary a method for Mr Barker. In No. 48 he inserted a ridiculous statement that Luther made it a rule to translate a verse of the Bible every day, which rapid rate of working "soon brought him to the conclusion of his labours." A few weeks later he wrote of this as though it had appeared in "Iconoclast's" section; in the same issue of the paper he also took occasion to insert a notice disclaiming all responsibility for anything that might appear in the last four pages, and this notice he continued week by week. All this to an infant paper was about as bad as a course of whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever to a child; that the *National Reformer*

survived it proves that it had an exceptionally strong constitution. Mr Bradlaugh naturally became much alarmed about its future, for it was noticeably falling away and losing strength. Feeling that a little more of such treatment would kill it outright, he addressed himself to those who, with himself, were responsible for its existence.

He sent a short letter to the shareholders of the *National Reformer* Company, in which he said:—

"Eighteen months since I, with the special aid of my Sheffield friends, initiated the present Company. The paper belonging to the Company was to have been edited by myself, but feeling that two men do more work than one—if such work be done unitedly—I offered to share such editorship with Mr Joseph Barker. The experience of the past twelve months has taught me that the paper can only be efficiently conducted under one editor."

After recounting the differences and difficulties, he ends by suggesting that both should tender their resignations, and that some one gentleman be elected as the sole conductor. If this course should be adopted, he says, he would offer himself as a candidate for the office.

An extraordinary meeting of the shareholders was called for August 26th (1861), and Mr Bradlaugh was elected as editor, with a salary of £5 per week, by 41 votes against 18 for Mr Barker, and with the next number this gentleman's connection with the paper came to an end.

Before dismissing Mr Barker's name altogether from these pages, I am anxious to record a little discovery that I have made since I have been at work upon this biography. If those who own a copy of the "Biography of Charles Bradlaugh," by A. S. Headingley, which for the most part gives a very fair account of the life of Mr Bradlaugh up to 1880, will turn to pages 78 to 82, they will find a story given there of rioting at Dumfries and Burnley during Mr Bradlaugh's visits to those towns. At Dumfries, so the story goes, there was so much violence exhibited that "Bradlaugh," whom the mob had threatened to kill, thought he had better wait until the excitement was over; he waited until midnight, when some one took him down into a cellar and so out into the street; once outside he feared to go to his hotel, but waited in the shadow by the river-side. At length he ventured to move a little, but was recognised by some persons, who rushed off

to raise the hue and cry. "Bradlaugh then turned down a dark side street and got back to the friendly river," where after a time he saw a policeman and then took courage "to walk by his side." He was soon met by friends, for the town was being scoured for him, and conducted to his hotel in safety. The story of what happened at Burnley is somewhat similar. I must confess that the account of these riots always annoyed and disappointed me. It was so unlike my father to wait about for fear of the mob, get out through the cellar and loiter by the river-side till he happened to meet a policeman under whose sheltering wing he at last ventured to go towards his lodgings. But Mr Bradlaugh having seen the book, having caused it to be revised in one or two points, it never occurred to me to doubt the *general* accuracy of the statements made in it. Lately, in searching for some account of these riots, I find that Mr Headingley is quite trustworthy, except on one point, and that is the *name of the lecturer* at Dumfries and Burnley. Those who own copies of this work are requested to substitute "Barker" for "Bradlaugh" wherever the latter name occurs on the pages specified, beginning with the paragraph at the bottom of page 78. No injustice will be done to Mr Barker's memory, for his own account * has been faithfully followed by Mr Headingley.

From the issue of September 7th (1861), then Mr Bradlaugh was sole editor of the *National Reformer*, and in the following number he made a declaration of his policy and objects as advocate of the Secular Body. In concluding this statement of his views he says:—

"Our party is the 'party of action,' youthful, hopeful effort; we recognise no impassable barriers between ourselves and *the right;* we see no irremovable obstacles in our course to *the true.* We will strive for it, we will live for it, and, if it be necessary, die for it. And even then, in our death we should not recognise defeat, but rather see another step in the upward path of martyrdom . . . . it is our most enduring hope that . . . . we may find a grave which, in the yet far-off future, better men than ourselves may honour in their memories; forgetting our many faults, alone remembered now, and remembering our few useful deeds, at present by our hostile critics persistently overlooked."

A month later appears one of his earliest letters to the clergy,

* *National Reformer*, March 23, 1861.

though not *the* earliest, for some five or six short letters, scattered over several months, had previously appeared; most of these were brief challenges based upon the public statements of some cleric, or repudiation of certain views attributed to Freethinkers, or condemnation of some intolerant utterance. The letter to the Rev. J. Clarke, of Cleckheaton, is, I think, about the first of those controversial letters of which he subsequently wrote so many, and which were so popular and effective. In November we find notification of another change to take place in the *National Reformer*. In future Mr George Jacob Holyoake is to "rank as chief contributor," while Mr John Watts is definitely charged with the duties of sub-editor. A week later, a letter signed "G. J. Holyoake," and headed "One Paper and One Party," informed "the Secularists of Great Britain" that Mr Holyoake had arranged to become special contributor. With the beginning of the year 1862 he was to contribute three pages of matter either from his own pen or from the pens of others for whom he was responsible. The *Reasoner*, edited since 1842 by Mr Holyoake, came to an end in the June of 1861; after that he was connected with the *Counsellor*, and was proposing to bring out a new paper called the *Secular World*. This latter title he liked so well that although he abandoned for the time the bringing out of his new paper in favour of special contributions to the *National Reformer*, he reserved to himself "a copyright in that idea." It will be remembered that the Company agreed to pay their editor £5 per week in full discharge of his duties. Of this Mr Holyoake was to receive £2 per week, leaving £3 to my father to pay other contributors, his sub-editor, and himself. An effort was made to sell 10,000 copies of the first issue of the paper under the new arrangement; about 8000 were sold, and the sale would have exceeded the 10,000, if the orders had not arrived too late to supply them.

In consequence of the diversity of opinion which had been expressed in the columns of the *National Reformer* at various times, a correspondent wrote in February 1862 asking what were the political and religious views really advocated by this journal; and from the answer made to this gentleman by Mr Bradlaugh, we can judge to what extent he went back upon the position of his earlier years, as it was for the last few years of his life the fashion to assert. He says:—

"Editorially the *National Reformer*, as to religious questions, is, and always has been, as far as we are concerned, the advocate of Atheism; it teaches that all the religions of the world are based upon error; that humanity is higher than theology; that knowledge is far preferable to faith; that action is more effective than prayer; and that the best worship men can offer is honest work, in order to make one another wiser and happier than heretofore. In politics, we are Radicals of a very extreme kind; we are advocates of manhood* suffrage; we desire shorter Parliaments; laws which will be more equal in their application to master and servant; protection from the present state of the laws which make pheasants more valuable than peasants; we desire the repeal of the laws against blasphemy, and the enactment of some measure which will make all persons competent as witnesses whatever may be their opinions on religion; we advocate the separation of Church and State, and join with the financial reformers in their efforts to reduce our enormous and extravagant national expenditure."

Those who have read the literature in connection with the Freethought movement for the five or six years prior to 1862 will be in no way unprepared to find that the journalistic union between Mr Holyoake and Mr Bradlaugh was very shortlived. In March my father, feeling unable to continue to work under existing arrangements, sent his resignation into the *National Reformer* Company; however, at the Special General Meeting held on the 23rd, it was decided not to elect any editor "in the place of Iconoclast." Mr Bradlaugh therefore continued to act as editor, and Mr Holyoake ceased to be special contributor to the paper. My father was anxious there should be no quarrel—there had been enough of

* "Manhood," Mr Bradlaugh explained later in answer to a letter from Mrs Law, he used "not in a sexual sense, but rather as asserting the right of every citizen to the franchise," with, of course, limitations as to insanity, etc. My father put his position in most unmistakable language in March 1884 in the *National Reformer*, in answer to a suggestion made by a correspondent that if there had been women-voters in Northampton he would not have been elected. "If the women-electors," he said, "thought fit to reject Mr Bradlaugh, and they made the majority, it would be their right. If Mr Bradlaugh were in the House of Commons he would vote for woman suffrage, even if he were sure he would in future be excluded by women's votes." And again in the December of the following year he urged: "Even if it were unfortunately true that every woman would always vote Tory, it would be the duty of Radicals to try and obtain the suffrage for them."

that with Mr Barker—and proposed to Mr Holyoake that he should contribute two columns of original matter each week, for which he should receive the same amount as he had received before for the three pages. The *Secular World* was re-announced, and it had my father's best wishes. "We believe that its advent will benefit the Freethought party," he writes. However, the matter was not to be so soon or so easily settled. Mr Holyoake claimed from my father the sum of £81, 18s., urging that the agreement to act as special contributor was for twelve months; although he had only filled the post for three months, he yet claimed his salary for the remaining nine. The matter was placed before legally appointed arbitrators—Mr W. J. Linton, chosen by my father, and Mr J. G. Crawford by Mr Holyoake. These gentlemen did not agree, Mr Linton being strongly in favour of Mr Bradlaugh, and Mr Crawford as strongly, I presume, on the other side. They therefore chose an umpire, Mr Shaen—who, by the way, had, I gather, previously acted as solicitor to Mr Holyoake, and who many years later showed a decided personal hostility towards Mr Bradlaugh. After many delays Mr Shaen at length made his award in August 1863 in favour of Mr Holyoake, and my father writing to a friend at the time says rather grimly: "The only good stroke of luck lately is that I am ordered by Shaen to pay G. J. H. £81, 18s. Linton will tell you the particulars."

In May 1862 Messrs W. H. Smith & Son first officially refused to supply their agents with the *National Reformer*. They then occupied the chief railway station bookstalls in England, but were not quite the monopolists they are to-day, and Mr Bradlaugh could for a little while at least get his paper sold at all the stations, numbering some sixty or seventy, on the North Eastern and Newcastle and Carlisle railways, at which book agencies were held by a Mr Franklin. It is wonderful, indeed, how this journal managed to live through more than thirty years in spite of this powerful boycott, extending as it afterwards did to every part of the kingdom. Mr Bradlaugh called upon his friends to use every effort to keep up the sale. "We will do our part," he wrote, "and we call upon our friends, east, west, north, and south, to do their duty also." During the last year of his life Mr Bradlaugh was given to understand that the boycott would be raised, and that Messrs W. H. Smith & Son would be willing to take the *National Reformer*

on to the railway bookstalls, but the first expenses would have been so great that he was unwilling to enter into the further financial liabilities which the new departure would have involved.

The *National Reformer* was not only from its earliest years refused by the most powerful booksellers in England, but it was maligned in a quarter where indeed it might have looked for fair play and a little justice—I mean by the Unitarians.* The cynical reflection that those who have themselves broken away from the conventional thought of the times always damn those who go a little further than themselves, carries a germ of truth within its bitter shell. The Unitarian body always seem to treat Freethinkers with an acrimony special to themselves and us. Individual Unitarians whom I have known personally have been kind, pleasant, liberal-minded people, but Unitarians as a body or as represented by their organ seldom enough have turned a kindly side towards atheists.

With every man's hand against it, with financial difficulties to cripple it, both the editor and the company of the unfortunate paper felt compelled to review the situation, and put matters on a somewhat different footing. Hence at a duly convened meeting held in September the company was wound up, and Mr Bradlaugh "appointed liquidator according to the terms of the Joint Stock Company's Act, 1856." From this time the sole responsibility, financial and otherwise, rested upon my father. Unfortunately, a few months later his health broke down, and at the urgent entreaty of his friends he "most reluctantly resolved to determine his connection as Editor, and to retire entirely from the conduct and responsibilities of the paper."

He begged therefore the support of all friends to Mr John Watts, who had consented to take up the onerous burden of editorship. Mr John Watts, in an address published the following week, wished it to be understood that he was taking up the editorship at the "express wish" of Iconoclast. On quitting the editor's chair with the issue of No. 146 (Feb. 28), Mr Bradlaugh gave expression to his wishes in regard to the conduct of the paper.

"I should wish," he says, "that the *National Reformer* may continue to advocate the fullest liberty of thought and utterance, conceding to others that which it claims for itself. That it should

---

* See *Inquirer*, May 31, 1862.

be plain and honest in its attacks on shams. That it should spare no falsehood merely because uttered by a great man, show no mercy to royal treachery simply from reverence for royalty, and have no pardon for crowned wrong while ragged wrong shall suffer . . . . ."

To Freethinkers and Radicals he says, with a bitter prescience of his own future fate indicated in some of his words: "Your duty lies not in petty personal strife, but in the diffusion of the great and mighty truths for which our predecessors have risked stake and dungeon. Your duty is not to take part in disputes whether John or Thomas is the better leader, but rather so to live as to need no leaders. A public man's life is composed of strange phases. If successful, he wins his success with hard struggling. As he struggles the little great ones before him, who envy his hope, block up his path. His ignorance is exposed, his incapability made manifest; and then when he has won the victory, and made a place for standing, each envious cowardly caviller, who dares not meet him face to face, stabs him with base innuendo in the back. I do not envy any statesman's character in the hands of his political antagonists, still less do I envy when I hear him dissected behind his back by his pseudo-friends."

In concluding his article he gives special praise to Mr John Watts and Mr Austin Holyoake for their help on the paper, taking the blame for all its past shortcomings on his own shoulders.

From February 1863 until April 1866 Mr John Watts edited the *National Reformer;* but unless my father happened to be abroad, as he frequently was during the early part of the sixties, traces of him were to be found somewhere or other in the paper, either in an article from his pen, a letter, or answers to correspondents on legal points. During these three years he contributed several notable articles, such as "Notes on Genesis and Exodus," "The Oath Question," "Real Representation of the People," "A Plea for Atheism," "Universality of Heresy," "The Atonement," "Antiquity and Unity of the Origin of the Human Race," "The Twelve Apostles," "Why do Men Starve?" and "Labour's Prayer," and many of which have been from time to time revised or rewritten, and published and republished in pamphlet form.

He also gave the paper considerable financial assistance, amounting in the three years to upwards of £250.

On the 22nd of April 1866, a notice appeared in the *National*

Reformer to the effect that Mr Bradlaugh would resume his editorial duties on the paper, of which he had never relinquished the copyright. The occasion for this announcement was a very sad one. Just as in 1863 Mr Bradlaugh, overtaken by illness, was obliged to lay aside his burden of editorship, so in 1866 Mr John Watts also became too ill to continue his work. But the illness of Mr John Watts was unhappily more serious than Mr Bradlaugh's; it was the forerunner of his death. In the November of the same year a career of some promise was cut short at its opening, and Mr John Watts died of consumption at the early age of thirty-two.

When he learned of his friend's illness my father readily consented to resume his former task as editor, and appointed as sub-editor Mr Charles Watts, who spoke of the satisfaction it had been to his brother to have so willing and able a friend take charge of the paper once more. A little later Mr Austin Holyoake was associated in the sub-editing with Mr Charles Watts.

Thus in 1866 the journal was once more under the full control of Mr Bradlaugh, and although he subsequently, for a time, associated another editor with himself, he thought for it and fought for it, wrote for it and cared for it, from that time until within a fortnight of his death, when from his dying bed he dictated a few words for me to write. He had to fight for it in press and law court.

In 1867 the high-priced and refined *Saturday Review* started the story, so often repeated since, that Mr Bradlaugh had compared God with a monkey with three tails; and further declared, with that delicacy of language which one expects to meet in such aristocratic company, that "such filthy ribaldry as we have, from a sense of duty, picked off Bradlaugh's dunghill, is simply revolting, odious, and nauseating to the natural sense of shame possessed by a savage." Needless to say, the "savage" feelings of the *Saturday Review* were much too delicate to admit any reply from the editor of the journal attacked. Mr Bradlaugh, of course, replied in his own paper, and "B. V." took up the cudgels also on behalf of his friend. He wrote at some length, and the following quotation truly and amusingly pictures the *National Reformer* at least:—

"This poor *N. R.!* Let us freely admit that it has many imperfections, many faults; its poverty secures for it a constant supply of poor writers, while securing for us, the poor writers, an opportunity of

publishing what we could hardly get published elsewhere. But I fear not to affirm that, by its essential character, it is quite incomparably superior to such a paper as the *S. R.* It has clear principles, which it honestly believes will immensely benefit the world; the *S. R.* is governed by hand-to-mouth expediency for the sole benefit of itself. The former is devoted to certain ideas; the latter has neither devotion nor ideas, but has a cool preference for opinions of good fashion and of loose and easy fit. The former is written throughout honestly, each writer stating with the utmost sincerity and candour what he thinks and feels; the latter—why, the latter would doubtless be ashamed to resemble in anything its poor contemporary. The former, though not always choice and accurate in its language, is generally written in plain clear English (and I really account this of importance, and even of vital importance, in an *English* publication); the latter is not written in any language at all, for a mixed jargon of the schools, the bar, the pulpit, and the clubs is certainly not a language."

Amongst the papers which copied the *Saturday Review* article was the *Printers' Journal;* and this paper, determined not to fall behind its aristocratic colleague, added a little slander on its own account, that the *National Reformer* was improperly printed by underpaid compositors—although had the editor cared to inquire, he would have found that the men were paid according to the regulations of the Printers' Society.

In January and June of 1867 there appeared in the *National Reformer* some noteworthy letters from the Rev. Charles Voysey. They are specially remarkable when contrasted with his public utterances of 1880. These letters arose out of a sermon preached at Healaugh on October 21st, 1866, in which Mr Voysey said that if it were urged

'that a belief in the Articles of the Christian Creed without morality is better than morality without belief,* I frankly own that, though I am a Churchman, I would rather see them put aside and torn up as rubbish, than see the cause of morality, which is true religion, for a moment imperilled. I would honestly prefer a morality without any religious belief—nay, even without any religious hopes and religious consolations—to the most comforting, satisfying creed without morality. . . . . Inexpressibly sad as it is to us, who rejoice in our Maker, and whose hearts pant for the Living God, yet there are some who cannot believe in him at all. Some of these are kept steadfast in duty,

* A dignitary of the Church was reported to have said that it was better "to have a religion without morality than morality without religion."

pure and upright in their lives, models of good fathers and mothers, good husbands and wives, and fulfilling God's own law of love, which in mercy he has not made dependent on Creed, but has engraven on our very hearts. They are living evidences of morality without religion; and if I had to choose between the lot of a righteous man who could not believe in a God, and the man of unlimited credulity, who cared not to be righteous so much as to be a believer, I would infinitely sooner be the righteous Atheist."

Mr Bradlaugh made a short comment upon this, to which Mr Voysey replied, and one or two further letters appeared. In a letter dated January 13th he writes:—

"But I leave these minor matters to express my heartfelt sympathy for what you call the 'Infidel party' under the civil disabilities which have hitherto oppressed them. I think with sorrow and shame of the stupid, as well as cruel contempt, with which some of my brother-clergymen have treated you; and I cannot but deplore the want of respect towards you as shown in the attitude of society, and in the continuance of those nearly obsolete laws which our less enlightened forefathers passed in the vain hope of checking the movements of the human mind. . . . . *I can do but very little, but that little I will do with all my heart to remove the stigma which attaches to my order through its blind and senseless bigotry.*"

The italics here are mine, as I wish to draw special attention to the sentiments of the Rev. Charles Voysey in 1867. In June of the same year he wrote other somewhat lengthy letters, in which he expressed his great respect for Mr Bradlaugh's "candour and honesty," and his thanks for the "invariable courtesy" shown him. That is the Mr Voysey of 1867. In 1880 the Rev. Charles Voysey proved the value of his unsought promise to work to remove the stigma from his order, by going out of his way to preach a sermon at the Langham Hall upon the "Bradlaugh Case," in which he explained that he felt "ashamed and disgraced by the people of Northampton for electing him [Charles Bradlaugh] to represent them;" he said that "most of the speeches in the Bradlaugh case, in favour of his exclusion, strike me as singularly good, wholesome, and creditable," and he felt thankful to the speakers for not mincing the matter. Mr Bradlaugh, making an exceedingly brief commentary on Mr Voysey's sermon, said:—

"We presume that this commendation included the various phrases invented for Mr Bradlaugh by 'hon.' members, but never used by him. Mr Voysey's belief in God seems to include approval

of the use of lies on God's behalf. Mr Voysey says: 'It is more than probable that if Mr Bradlaugh had claimed to affirm without giving reasons for it the Speaker would have at once permitted him to affirm.' Here Mr Voysey writes in absolute and inexcusable ignorance of what actually took place. For eightpence Mr Voysey can buy the Report of the Select Parliamentary Committee, which, while unfavourable to me, gives the exact facts, and this at least he ought to do before he preaches another sermon full of inaccuracies as to fact, and replete with unworthy insinuation."

"The whole affair," says Mr Voysey, "has been a perfect jubilee to the martyr and his friends." And in the end it was—such a jubilee as is never likely to fall to the lot of Mr Voysey. True, it was paid for in years of care and terrific mental anxieties; true, it was heralded with insult and actual personal ill-usage; true, it cost a life impossible to replace; but the "jubilee" came when over the "martyr's" very deathbed the House of Commons itself vindicated his honour; when even a Tory statesman could be found to uphold my father's conduct in the House, and a Tory gentleman to proclaim that he was "a man who had endeavoured to do his duty." It was a jubilee of the triumph of consistent courage and honesty over "blind and senseless bigotry" and unprincipled malice.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER" AND ITS GOVERNMENT PROSECUTIONS.

On the third of May 1868 the *National Reformer* appeared in a new character. A startling announcement at the head of the Editorial Notices sets forth that "the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Inland Revenue having commenced proceedings to suppress the *National Reformer*, a special fund is opened, to be entitled 'The *National Reformer* Defence Fund,' to which subscriptions are invited." Above the editorial leaders was the legend, "Published in Defiance of Her Majesty's Government, and of the 60 Geo. III. cap. 9."

Beyond these two statements no further information was given until the following week, when Mr Bradlaugh explained in answer to numerous inquirers that the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue had, under 60 Geo. III., cap. 69, required him to give sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in his columns; that they had sent officially to purchase a copy; and that they claimed £20 for each separate copy of the *National Reformer* published. Another communication came from W. H. Melvill, Esq., Solicitor to the Inland Revenue Office, insisting upon his compliance with the requirements of the statute. Mr Bradlaugh replied intimating his refusal, and stating that he was prepared to contest the matter. He also addressed a short public letter to the Commissioners:—

"You have," he writes, "taken the pains to officially remind me of an Act of Parliament, passed in 1819, avowedly for the suppression of cheap Democratic and Freethought literature, and you require me to comply with its provisions, such provisions being absolutely prohibitory to the further appearance of this journal. With all humility, I am obliged to bid you defiance; you may kill the *National Reformer*, but it will not commit suicide. Before you destroy the paper we shall have to fight the question as far as my means will permit me."

The Government showed itself in so little hurry to notice Mr Bradlaugh's defiance that he announced the suspension of the "defence fund" in the hope that the Government had "reconsidered its hasty intimations." My father's warlike spirit appears to have made him half regretful that all these preliminary threatenings seemed about to result in nothing more serious, for he believed he "should have made a good fight for the liberty of the press;" although, on the other hand, he was, of course, "delighted to be let alone," as he could not afford "to go to jail," and "jail" would have been the natural termination to his defeat and the Government triumph. The hopes and fears of his suspense were, however, at length brought to an end, and the next issue of the *National Reformer* (May 24) appeared with the words "Prosecuted by Her Majesty's Government" printed in large black type on the front page; and this announcement was so continued until the end of the proceedings, giving to the journal—despised and rejected by its contemporaries as it was—quite a distinguished appearance.

In fact, the public could hardly have read his words as to the possibility of a reconsideration by the Government, when he received an ominously worded writ * from the Solicitor's Department, Somerset House, for the recovery of two penalties of £50 and £20 attaching to the publication and sale of the paper; and it may be remarked that the claim of these sums of £50 and £20 meant considerably more than would appear to the eye of the uninitiated, for it meant £50 "for each and every day" since publication, and £20 "for each and every copy" published, so that the amount of the penalties really claimed was something tremendous. On these two numbers alone, at the very lowest estimate, it must have reached somewhere about a quarter of a million of money. "The Defence Fund" was of course re-opened; for, as we shall see later on, Mr Bradlaugh had by this time gained plenty of personal experience as to the cost of litigation, and opposing the Government law

* "This writ is issued against you for the recovery of two penalties of £50 and £20 incurred by you in respect of the publication and sale of '*The National Reformer*, Secular Advocate and Freethought Journal' newspaper of 3rd May 1868, without making the Declaration and Recognisances, required respectively by the Statutes 6 and 7 Wm. iv. cap. 76, and 1st Wm. iv. cap. 73; and also for two other like penalties in respect of the publication and sale of the newspaper of 18th May 1868."

officers promised largely in the way of expense. Hosts of small subscribers sent their small sums to swell the funds for the defence of the persecuted and prosecuted paper. Meetings were held, and a petition for the repeal of the Statutes of William and George was immediately got up. One of the first to be presented was one from Mr Bradlaugh himself, which was laid before the House on May 25th by Mr John Stuart Mill; on the same day Mr Crawford presented one from Mr Austin Holyoake; and later on people in various parts of the country, sent in petitions through their respective members. These petitions and the general agitation soon began to have their effect, and resulted in a meeting of members being convened to be held in one of the Committee Rooms of the House, to consider the proper action to be taken. Men like James Watson, who had suffered imprisonment for his defence of the liberty of the press; Richard Moore, whose name was well known in those days for his efforts to promote political freedom; and Mr C. D. Collet, who had worked untiringly for political reforms: such men as these came forward with help and advice, as well as many others who, like Edward Truelove and Austin Holyoake, were intimately associated with my father. On the 28th May he received an "information" from the law officers of the Crown, but, curiously enough, it was undated. No one who knows anything of Mr Bradlaugh will need to be told that this slip did not pass unnoticed, and on the following day, with the view of gaining a slight extension of the time to plead, he applied to Mr Baron Bramwell to order the withdrawal of the information. Baron Bramwell made the order applied for, and the solicitor to the Inland Revenue amended his document the same day.

From this "information," with its customary confusion of legal jargon retailed to clients at so much per folio, we may extricate three essential points, which I will put plainly in as many lines, viz., that Mr Bradlaugh was being proceeded against for (1) publishing the *National Reformer;* for (2) being the proprietor of it; and for (3) selling the paper so published and owned "at a less price than sixpence, to wit, at the price of twopence."

These last words were pregnant with meaning, for, as my father wrote at the time, "If the price was sixpence I should not be prosecutable; it is only cheap blasphemy and sedition which is liable to be suppressed." The rich might read the covert blas-

phemies of an affectedly pious and unaffectedly sixpenny weekly journal, or dally over expensive and erudite treatises which were openly heretical; but ignorance and religion were necessary to the masses to keep them in proper subjection, and woe betide those rash men who ventured to throw open to these the door of the Chamber of Knowledge! Has not this been the law of England, and is it not in fact the sentiment of certain Englishmen even to-day?

As the particulars conveyed in this formidable "information" differed somewhat from those furnished in the earlier *subpœna ad respondum*, Mr Bradlaugh applied to the Courts to compel further and better particulars concerning the penalties for which judgment was prayed. This application was heard on the 30th May, in the Court of Exchequer, before Mr Justice Montague Smith, and was opposed by counsel (of whom there was quite an array) on behalf of the Crown. After a "lengthy and rather sharp passage of arms" the Judge decided in favour of the application, and ordered the solicitor to the Inland Revenue to "deliver to the defendant a further and better account in writing of the particulars of the statutes referred to in the 3rd and 6th counts." * This victory over the law officers of the Crown was of trifling consequence, except as giving a little additional time for pleading, and as showing his opponents that they had to deal with a man ready to see and ready to use every advantage given him. This second victory, small perhaps as bearing on the final issues, was of vast moral importance, for it forced the Crown to state that they relied on the obnoxious statute of George III. for the enforcement of the 3rd and 6th counts. The assistant-solicitor, Stephen Dowell, Esq., made this admission in the briefest possible language, abandoning the "to wits" and other ornamental phraseology of the original wordy information. On the 1st June Mr Bradlaugh entered four pleas in his defence; but it was now the turn of the law officers of the Crown to interpose, and they objected that a defendant might only plead one plea, and referred their opponent to the 21 James I., cap. iv. sec. 4, as bearing on the case. The letter conveying this objection was put into my father's hands at Euston Station just as he was leaving by the 2.45 train for Northampton, the suffrages of which

* The 4th, 5th, and 6th counts were identical with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, except that they referred to a different issue of the paper.

town he was then seeking to win for the first time. That very day was the last for giving notice for the next sittings, and half-past three was the latest time available on that day. Mr Bradlaugh felt himself in a position of considerable embarrassment. There was no time for consideration; he doubted the accuracy of the Government, but he was not acquainted with the wording of the statute of James; his train was on the point of leaving for Northampton, and some decision must be come to immediately. He despatched a clerk to Somerset House with authority to modify his plea according to the terms of the solicitor's letter, but reserving his right to inquire into the matter, and take such course upon it as the law permitted.

On his return from Northampton, he went at once to Messrs Spottiswoode, the Queen's Printers, and there he learned that the statute of James was "not only out of print, but had not been asked for within the memory of the oldest employee in the Queen's Printing Office." On referring to the Statute Book, he arrived at the opinion that Mr Melvill was once more in error, and therefore went himself to Somerset House, where, to his "great surprise," he found that the Government lawyers were no better informed than himself, and merely sheltered themselves under an opinion of the counsel to the Treasury that he had no right to plead more than one plea. Upon hearing this, Mr Bradlaugh immediately wrote Mr Melvill that unless he at once pointed out the authority under which his right of pleading was limited to "Not Guilty," he should apply to a judge at chambers to have his pleas reinstated. Mr Melvill replied on the same day repeating his declaration, but without giving his authority. The next day (Friday, June 5th) Mr Bradlaugh was served with a rule that the case should be tried by a special jury, and that the jury should be nominated on the Tuesday following. On Saturday the application to reinstate the pleas was heard before Mr Justice Willes. After a great deal of discussion, the judge at length endorsed the summons with a delaration giving Mr Bradlaugh liberty to raise upon the trial all the issues involved in his pleas.

The trial came on in the Court of Exchequer on Saturday, June 13th, before Mr Baron Martin. The Court was filled with Mr Bradlaugh's friends, to witness this great forensic contest between himself, on behalf of a free, unshackled press on the one hand, and on the other, Her Majesty's Attorney-General, Sir John Karslake,

Kt., aided and assisted by the Solicitor-General and an inferior legal gentleman "in stuff," on behalf of the Government and the oppressive press laws of George and William. When the jury was called only ten gentlemen answered to their names; thereupon the Associate asked the Attorney-General, "Do you pray a tales?" The Attorney-General answered, "We do not pray a tales." The Associate then asked Mr Bradlaugh the same question, to which he also replied in the negative. Upon this the jury was discharged, and the great press prosecution entered into by the moribund Tory Government of 1868 came to an abortive end.

"It is not in mortals—least of all, in mortals mean as these—to command success. I make no doubt that the man who has the courage to defy them will at least do more—deserve it." So wrote "Caractacus" before this nominal trial came on, and assuredly whatever measure of success there was in it was surely on my father's side. Mr Bradlaugh did not "pray a tales," because by so doing he would have forfeited certain rights; but by not praying a tales, and by not asking for fines to be imposed upon the absent jurymen, the law officers of the Crown most clearly showed their eagerness to seize upon any excuse to abandon the proceedings upon which they had so rashly embarked. To do the Government justice, I think they had been rather driven into the matter by their bigoted followers. As far back as 1866 we find the English Church Union urging the prosecution of an "infidel newspaper, reputed to possess a considerable circulation." The matter had actually been brought before the Attorney-General, with a view to legal proceedings, and he, "whilst suggesting the necessity of mature consideration as to the desirability of procuring prominence for a comparatively obscure publication by means of a public prosecution, promised that the question should be very carefully considered." In 1867 the *Saturday Review* tried week by week to inflame the mind of the public against the *National Reformer* and Mr Bradlaugh, and other Tory journals followed the example so worthily set them. Judging from all this, one can hardly be assuming too much in supposing the action of the Government was not altogether spontaneous.

At the meeting of members of Parliament and others interested in the matter to which I have already referred, Messrs Ayrton, M.P., Milner Gibson, M.P., J. S. Mill, M.P., R. Moore, C. D. Collet, E. Truelove, and A. Holyoake were present, and after some

talk it was decided to raise the question the next evening (June 12) in the House on going into Supply. Accordingly, on the following evening Mr Ayrton, in a speech of considerable length, called attention to the state of the law regarding registration and security in respect of certain publications, but the Attorney-General politely characterised his statements as "utterly at variance with the facts." Mr Milner Gibson, in an able speech, demonstrated some of the absurdities of the press laws. John Stuart Mill asked for the repeal of the Act, and pending that the suspension of all prosecutions under it, and Mr Crawford "pleaded in tones of eloquence and fire for a free and untaxed literature for the working classes."

It will probably occur to every one, as it occurred to me, that it would be interesting to know what were the comments of the press upon this debate, and the abortive trial held upon the following day. I have looked through several London journals of that particular date, but have failed to find any comments whatever; the press was apparently in profound ignorance concerning this important matter, which so vitally affected its interests.* I did, however, find something in my search; I found that in the *Times* report of the parliamentary debate upon the registration of newspapers which I have just alluded to, the name of the *National Reformer* was actually omitted from Mr Ayrton's speech, although the suit against it was deemed of such importance as to require the services of the Attorney and the Solicitor-General, and a third counsel. I turned over the pages of the *Times* and other papers, vainly seeking for some report of the proceedings in the Court of Exchequer—but there was not one line: to such pettiness did the leading journals of the day condescend.

In concluding the account of this, the first prosecution of the *National Reformer*, I cannot pass over without notice the conduct of the Rev. John Page Hopps, who, with those other gentlemen whose names have already been mentioned, set up a brilliant exception to the usual manner in which Mr Bradlaugh was treated

* A few provincial papers condemned the prosecution, and later on the *Daily Telegraph* announced a possible repeal of the Press Laws, and that in the meantime "the Government had resolved not to press the objectionable clauses."

by the publicists of the day. He wrote to my father a hearty letter, saying that while of course differing from him in certain opinions, he thought the prosecution "both cowardly and mean," and wishing him "success and support," promised him whatever aid he could give.

In the year 1868 Mr Bradlaugh ceased to use that name under which he had carried on his public career from the time of his return from the army. The disguise had always been a very transparent one, and the smallest Christian taunt at his *nom de guerre* made him cast caution to the winds and declare his real name. At the time of his first candidature for a seat in Parliament in 1868 he determined to throw aside even this semblance of concealment, and all announcements were henceforward made in the name of "Charles Bradlaugh," although the repute of "Iconoclast" had been so great that the name clung to him for many years; in some of the Yorkshire and Lancashire districts it was proudly remembered until the last. The *National Reformer* was issued for the first time on November 15th, 1868, as "edited by Charles Bradlaugh," instead of "edited by Iconoclast" as heretofore. The winter of this year was a very stormy one politically; the general election of December resulted in turning out the Tories and bringing the Liberals into power under the leadership of Mr Gladstone. Mr Gladstone and his colleagues had not been in office many weeks before they took up the press prosecution abandoned by their Tory predecessors, and as early as January 16th, 1869, Mr Bradlaugh received formal notice that the Government intended to proceed to trial. Mr Bradlaugh confessed that this move came quite unexpectedly to him, but he would "fight to the last," whether against Tory or against Liberal. He regarded it, however, as "a most infamous shame that a private individual should have been put to the expense of one abortive trial, and should now have another costly ordeal to go through on the same account."

On Tuesday morning, February 2nd, the case again came on in the Court of Exchequer, this time before Mr Baron Bramwell. The Attorney-General, Sir Robert Collier, the Solicitor-General, Sir J. D. Coleridge, and Mr Crompton Hutton were there to plead on behalf of the odious Security Laws, and enforce them against one man and one paper selected out of "hundreds, nay thousands, of publications liable under the same Acts of Parliament, which do not comply with their provisions, and which are yet allowed to

go on unprosecuted." Just as had happened in the previous year, so, curiously enough, on this occasion also only ten special jurymen answered to their names; but this time a tales was prayed by the Crown, and the absent jurymen were fined £10 each. Sir Robert Collier appears to have done his work as little offensively to my father as possible, and at the end of his opening speech said:—

"Mr Bradlaugh knows perfectly well that if at any time he had intimated his readiness to comply with the provisions of the Act, the prosecution would not have been proceeded with. The prosecution is not for the purpose of punishing and fining him, but to ensure compliance with this Act, as long as it remains the law; and if Mr Bradlaugh sees his mistake, as I think he will, and will comply with the Act, no penalties will be enforced against him."

For a Republican and Freethought paper to give sureties against technical sedition and blasphemy, "even if we could find friends insane enough to enter into recognisances," would be like announcing Hamlet at the Lyceum with the part of the Prince of Denmark cut out. So in spite of Sir Robert Collier's grace and politeness, Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to persist, and the prosecution there upon proceeded with the examination of witnesses as to the purchase of the paper, etc.

The Crown obtained a verdict; but there were seven points reserved on my father's behalf for discussion and decision. "At present," wrote my father, "we are not beaten, and we will persevere to the end; but we must deplore that the present advisers of the Crown should think it right to try to ruin an individual with a litigation of such an enormously costly character."

There were some rather amusing incidents in connection with this trial. When Baron Bramwell pronounced his verdict for the Crown, Mr Crompton Hutton rose in his place, and said with a grand air of generosity that as the first and second counts were the same, "it would not be right for the Crown to take two penalties," therefore a verdict might be for the defendant upon the second and fifth counts. As though when penalties had reached well into seven figures, a million or two less was of much consequence! Mr Austin Holyoake, in a descriptive article upon the prosecution, which he found it difficult to class as either tragedy or farce, since "it resembles very much a melodrama in two gasps and

a tableau," says in regard to the suggested non-enforcement of full fines :—

"This relieved my mind very much ; for as the penalties have accumulated since May last to between three and four millions had we been suddenly called upon to pay, I feel sure the sum I had with me would have fallen short by at least two millions of the amount forfeited to 'our sovereign lady the Queen.' The Chancellor of the Exchequer is very busy devising schemes to create a surplus for his next budget. Perhaps this is one of them."

The learned Attorney-General, Sir Robert Collier, in the course of his opening speech, read the statute of the 60 Geo. III. chap. 9, sec. 8, which laid down regulations as to the publication of any paper, etc., which "shall not exceed two sheets, or which shall be published at a less price than sixpence." In reading this statute, Sir Robert Collier remarked that the provision as to pamphlets had been repealed. When it came to Mr Bradlaugh's turn to speak in his defence, he pointed out the error of this. The Attorney-General "has read to you the statute of the 60 Geo. III. chap. 9, and he himself, the representative of the Crown here to-day, knows so little of the statute that he . . . . states that the part as to pamphlets is a part which has been repealed. The fact is that the whole of this Act of Parliament is a living Act."

Having put the Attorney-General right in the matter of law, it was now Mr Bradlaugh's turn to inform the officials at Somerset House of what went on in their own department. At the trial Mr Edward Tilsley, a clerk in the office of the Solicitor of Inland Revenue, had sworn, accurately sworn, under the cross-examination of the defendant, that the *Sporting Times* was not registered. On the 4th of February all the morning papers contained a letter from Mr Tilsley announcing that he had made a search, and that the *Sporting Times* was registered, and he asked for publicity of this fact "in justice to the proprietors of that paper." The proprietors must have been considerably astonished. Mr Bradlaugh was ; and to such an extent did his amazement carry him, that he immediately went to Somerset House, where he also searched the register. The result of his search appeared in the following letter, published in the papers of the 5th :—

"Sir —With reference to Mr Tilsley's letter in your issue of to-day, permit me to state that I have this morning searched the registers at

Somerset House in the presence of that gentleman, and that his evidence in court seems to have been more correct than his correction. The *Sporting Times* is not registered. Mr Tilsley's error, when writing to you, arose from the fact that another paper with the same name was once registered, but this was before the popular journal of Dr Shorthouse came into existence. I believe Dr Shorthouse would contend, as I contended at the trial, that his publication does not come under the statutory definition of a newspaper."

As the days flew by Mr Bradlaugh grew more and more confident that he had a good case to go before the judges in asking for his rule, and he notes that "a feeling in favour of my ultimate success seems gaining ground in many competent quarters, although the utmost surprise is felt that a Liberal Government should persist in such a prosecution." A petition was drawn up setting forth the chief points in the prosecution, and praying that all such enactments as create differences between high and low priced publications to the detriment of the latter might be repealed. Mr Bradlaugh sent his petition to Viscount Enfield, Member for Middlesex, who duly presented it. For thus doing his bare duty to one of his constituents, Viscount Enfield was most virulently attacked by the *Blue Budget*. Lord Enfield and Mr Bradlaugh were unknown to each other, and the former had merely fulfilled the obligation of his Parliamentary membership; for this he was accused of being the apologist for Mr Bradlaugh, for whom he did "not object to risk his reputation."

On Thursday, April 15th, Lord Chief Baron Kelly, Baron Bramwell, and Baron Cleasby, sitting in the Exchequer Court, heard the motion for a new rule. The three judges listened to Mr Bradlaugh with the greatest attention, and took the utmost care to fully comprehend the bearing of every argument he put forward, although their continuous interruptions were rather embarrassing to him. Having heard what he had to urge, a rule *nisi* was granted him on three points; if he succeeded in maintaining his rule on either of two points, the prosecution was at an end; if he failed in these, but succeeded in the third, then there would have to be a new trial. It is hardly wonderful that, having gained so much, he began to feel fairly sanguine of success; nor is it less wonderful that, with all the worry and all the work, he should be feeling rather bitter against the Government, which had actually brought in a Bill on April 8th to repeal those enactments

which they were at that very moment trying to enforce against him.

"If the Gladstone Cabinet had been a generous one," he wrote, "it would have abandoned a prosecution which, when carried on by the late Government, some of the members of the present Cabinet had already emphatically condemned. If the Gladstone Government had been just and consistent, it should at least, when bringing in a Bill to repeal the very laws under which we are prosecuted, have delayed the legal proceedings in this case until after the debate in the House upon this Bill, which has now actually passed its second reading."

The rule of court granted by the judges was served upon the solicitor to the Inland Revenue on the 16th of April. Upon the 23rd that gentleman wrote Mr Bradlaugh that as it was proposed to repeal the enactments under which the proceedings had been instituted, "the Law Officers of the Crown will agree to a *stet processus* being entered," and asked if he would consent to this course. To this Mr Bradlaugh made answer:—

"Sir,—I will consent to a *stet processus* being entered, not because of the Bill now before the House of Commons, but because I am sick of a litigation involving loss of time, anxiety, and expense; and I consent only with the distinct declaration on my part, that I am not liable under the statutes under which I am prosecuted, and protesting that a Liberal Government ought never to have carried on such a prosecution. If the Law Officers of the Crown had proposed a *stet processus* when the new Government came into office, the act would have been graceful; now, after twelve months of harassing litigation, the staying further proceedings, when a rule has been granted in my favour, is a matter for which I owe no thanks.

"If any more formal consent is necessary, I will give it. I never courted the contest, nor have I ever shrunk from it; but I have no inclination to carry it on; fighting the Crown is a luxury only to be indulged in by the rich as a voluntary occupation. I have fought from necessity, and have the sad consciousness that I retire victor at a loss I am ill able to bear."

In the *National Reformer* for the following week my father announced the total monies subscribed for the defence of the *National Reformer* at £256, 10s.; these were mainly from the hard earnings of poor friends, although a few had helped out of their fuller purses. He gave also a detailed account of the money

he had actually paid away during this litigation; it amounted to £300, but of course this did not include the value of the time lost both directly and indirectly * in the course of these proceedings. To be £50 out of pocket is but a trifle to a rich man, but when it forms one item amongst many to a poor man it is a very serious matter. John Stuart Mill wrote him from Avignon: "You have gained a very honourable success in obtaining a repeal of the mischievous Act by your persevering resistance." But he did not think there was any hope of getting the Government to refund my father's expenses, although, as he said, a "really important victory" had been obtained. The "poor friends," however, continued to subscribe their pence and their shillings until the deficiency was in great part, if not wholly, made up.

The repealing Bill introduced into the House by Mr Ayrton and the Chancellor of the Exchequer passed through its three stages without debate, and was then sent up to the House of Lords in charge of the Marquis of Lansdowne, who introduced it to his brother peers on Monday, May 31st. Lord Lansdowne explained that the Act of Geo. III. was passed at a time of much agitation,

"when it was thought necessary to subject the Press to every conceivable restriction and coercion. In repealing these Acts their lordships need not apprehend that there would be no security against an abuse by the Press of the power which it enjoyed, for it would remain amenable to the Libel and other Acts, and the distinction between newspapers and books being one not of kind but of degree, there was no reason why the former should be treated in an exceptional way. Generally speaking, moreover, these Acts had not of late years been enforced, though their retention on the Statute Book enabled persons to take advantage of them with the view of gratifying personal feeling."

Lord Cairns, the Lord Chancellor, and the Duke of Somerset, spoke, but upon points of the Bill other than that referring to newspapers. That the "debate" was not lengthy will be fully realised from the fact that upon this occasion the Lord Chancellor took his seat on the woolsack at five o'clock, and "their lordships adjourned at five minutes before six." The Bill passed its second and third reading (this last on June 21st) without a further word of discussion. Thus, almost in complete silence, were the Security

* He was at one period quite ill and under Dr Ramskill's care through the overwork and mental worry of this lawsuit.

Laws swept from the Statute Book, and cheap prints and dear prints made to stand technically equal in the eye of the law.

What were the comments of the Press on this great triumph so hardly won for them? After the trial of February 2nd, the *Morning Star* printed a splendid article against the prosecution, but all the other daily papers of the metropolis persevered in their silence. "To struggle with the Treasury officials would be no mean task," said my father, "even if we had words of encouragement and more efficient aid from those, many of whom stand like ourselves, liable to be attacked as infringers of an oppressive law. As it is, we fight alone, and only one of the London journals has spoken out on our behalf." The *Manchester Courier* wondered why the law had not been put in force against the *National Reformer* before. The *Blue Budget* reviled Lord Enfield for merely presenting a petition. The *Times* report of the lengthy proceedings before the three judges on April 15th occupies only twenty-five lines. The only London papers which printed Mr Melvill's offer of a *stet processus* and Mr Bradlaugh's rejoinder were the *Times*, *Star*, *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and *Queen's Messenger*. "Not one paper said a word in our favour or congratulated us on the battle we have had to fight." Finally, the repealing Bill passed through all its stages and became law without notice or remark. The bigotry of the leading journals of the day was so great that although they themselves reaped an easy harvest from the toil and suffering of their Freethought contemporary, they had not the grace to utter a word of good fellowship or rejoicing.

But the Government had not even yet done with Mr Bradlaugh and the *National Reformer*. After allowing him some years' respite, an attack was directed against him from another quarter. In the autumn of 1872 the Postmaster-General, Mr Monsell, gave my father notice that the *National Reformer* was to be deprived of the privilege of registration, notwithstanding that for the past nine years it had been registered for foreign transmission as a newspaper, and had been within the last five years prosecuted by both Tory and Whig Attorney-General as a newspaper.

This notice was quite unexpected, and, as might be imagined, my father did not take it very kindly.

Quite an unusual number of papers took up the cudgels in his defence. Most, of course, professed either a profound dislike of his personality, or ignorance of the contents of his journal, but they

were thoroughly alarmed at the prospects opened up by this novel method of press censorship.

By the end of October, however, Mr Bradlaugh received an intimation that the Postmaster-General had withdrawn his objection. The Government seemed determined to advertise the paper, and although they did not gain anything themselves, the processes they employed were very worrying to its poor proprietor. He wrote a special word of thanks to the numerous journals who had asked for fair play towards him, and in doing so also tendered his sympathy "to the one or two bigoted editors who prematurely rejoiced" over the suppression of the Freethought organ.

CHAPTER XV.

ITALY.

Full of sympathy for Italy, my father spoke much on benalf of Garibaldi and Italian emancipation. When Garibaldi made his "famous Marsala effort," money was collected from all parts of the United Kingdom and sent to his assistance, mainly through the agency of W. H. Ashhurst, Esq. And men went as well as money. "Excursionists" was the name given to these volunteers, amongst whom not a few Freethinkers were numbered. It was always my father's pride to remember that in 1860 he sent Garibaldi 100 guineas. For if he had an empty purse, he had a full heart and an eloquent tongue, and with these he minted the gold to send to Garibaldi and Italy. I have tried, as a matter of interest, to collect together a list of the towns where these Garibaldi lectures were given, but I have not traced more than about half. At Sheffield he earned £20, and Oldham, Holmfirth, Halifax, Nottingham, Rochdale, Northampton, Mexbro', also furnished funds, each town according to its rate of prejudice against the speaker or its ardour for the cause he advocated. In some towns the enthusiasm was so great that hall proprietor and bill printer refused payment in order that their fees should swell the funds; in other places piety and prejudice was so strong that the audiences were not large enough to furnish the actual expenses. On receiving the money Garibaldi wrote my father a letter with his own hand, thanking him for the services he was then rendering to Italy. I am, unfortunately, not able to give the text of this letter, which my father received on July 20th, 1861, for although I have a distinct recollection of having seen it, it has either passed into other hands or become accidentally destroyed.

Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with Mazzini about 1858, when he was living at Onslow Terrace, Brompton, under the name of Signor Ernesti. From the first he won my father's heart, and to the end—although on certain matters their opinions became widely divergent—he placed him high above most men,

reverencing in him his single-mindedness, his purity of purpose, his steadfastness and courage. After Mazzini's death Mr Bradlaugh wrote of him:* "He was one of the few men who impress you first and always with the thorough truthfulness and incorruptibility of their natures. Simple in his manners, with only one luxury, his cigar, he had that fulness of faith in his cause which is so contagious, and by the sheer force of personal contact he made believers in the possibility of Italian unity even amongst those who were utter strangers to his thought and hope."

A framed portrait of Mazzini always hung in my father's room. At Sunderland Villa it hung in his little study; but at Circus Road, where the crowding books rapidly usurped almost every inch of available space, the picture hung in his bedroom. Subscriptions received for the emancipation of Italy were acknowledged on the back of signed photographs of Mazzini, or on specially engraved forms dated from Caprera, but bearing Mazzini's characteristic signature. There are doubtless many people who still retain such acknowledgments received through Mr Bradlaugh, and just before his death, Mr Joseph Gurney, of Northampton, very kindly gave me two that he had received in this way.

At the conclusion of his Autobiography Mr Bradlaugh wrote: "In penning the foregoing sketch I had purposely to omit many facts connected with branches of Italian, Irish, and French politics," because "there are secrets which are not my own alone, and which may not bear telling for many years to come." My father died with these secrets still untold. For all three countries he risked his life or liberty; but, beyond knowing this and a few anecdotes—told by him at the supper table at the end of a day's lecturing—I know very little that is definite. I have two letters of Mazzini's to my father without date or address; but although they suggest many possibilities, they tell nothing:—

"My Dear Sir,—I do not think you can do anything for me in the three places you mention. Of course, I shall always be glad to see you.—Yours faithfully, Jos. Mazzini.

"Friday."

"My dear Mr Bradlaugh,

"Can you? Will you?

"Ever faithfully yours,

"Thursday. Jos. Mazzini."

* "Five Dead Men Whom I Knew When Living," by Charles Bradlaugh.

Mr Bradlaugh first visited Naples in November 1861, and some of his impressions as to Naples and Rome were recorded in the *National Reformer* at the time, and more than twenty years later he wrote a description of Ischia for *Our Corner*. I have the passport issued to him by "John, Earl Russell," on the 11th November 1861, lying before me now; it is stamped and marked all over till there is scarcely a clear space anywhere on it, back or front. Naples 1861, France 1861, Germany 1863, Geneva 1866, Rome 1866, France 1871, Germany (?) 1871, Spain 1873, Portugal 1873, and other places, the stamps of which are now quite illegible. There is hardly a stamp on it that does not suggest the possibility, nay, the certainty, of some story we would give much to know. Naples—Rome—these bring up the thoughts of the struggle for Italian freedom, linked with the names of Garibaldi and Mazzini; France—the War, the Commune, and the Republic; Spain—the War, the Republic and Castelar, the failure. Looking at this passport with its covering of names and dates legible and illegible, I realise to the full how little I know, and how feebly I am able to portray the great events of my father's life; to say that I do my best seems almost a mockery when we know that this "best" is so poor and so fragmentary.

While he was at Naples in 1861, Mr Bradlaugh was diligently watched by the police, and his bedroom at the hotel was frequently overhauled. For instance, an English book he was reading, and marking with his pencil as he read, disappeared for a day or so, and on its return bore traces—to the keen eye of its owner at least—of having been carefully examined.

A story, which I have slightly amended from Mr Headingley's biography,* will give some idea as to how closely he was observed and what risks he ran.

The police, as I have said, were soon put on the alert when Mr Bradlaugh arrived in Italy, and evidently kept a keen watch over his every movement. Thus it was ascertained that while at Naples, a few days after Bomba's fall, he had received a packet of political letters. It has been said that walls have ears. In this case they evidently possessed eyes.

He was in the room of his hotel, alone, and, as he thought, safe from all observation. A friend then entered, and without any

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh, by A. S. Headingley, p. 62.

conversation of a nature that could be overheard, gave him the packet which he had volunteered to take over to England with him. Though as a rule not devoid of prudence, he so little suspected any danger on this occasion that he took no special precaution. He left Naples in a steamboat sailing under the flag of the two Sicilies, and all went smoothly, excepting the ship, till they reached Civitâ Vecchia. Here, to the surprise, if not to the alarm, of the passengers, a boat-load of Papal gendarmes came on board. Even at this moment Mr Bradlaugh was not yet on his guard, and had the gendarmes at once made for his portmanteau, they might possibly have seized the despatches.

The sub-officer preferred, however, resorting to what he doubtless considered a very clever stratagem. He politely inquired for Mr Bradlaugh, whom he discovered with so little difficulty that it is probable he knew perfectly well the principal characteristics of his general appearance. With much politeness, this officer informed him that the British Consul wished to see him on shore. This at once put my father on his guard. If he went on shore he would be on Roman soil, subject to the Papal laws, and there was no guarantee for his safety. On the other hand, he did not know the English Consul, and had no business with him. Evidently this was but a mere trap, so Mr Bradlaugh, with equal politeness, refused to land.

The officer, joined by the full force of the Papal gendarmes, proceeded this time with less ceremony. They ordered him to show his luggage, and evidently knew that it contained the secret dispatches. My father now understood that he had been betrayed. Yet no one at Naples could have seen him when he received the letters, and the walls alone could have seen the transactions, unless a hole had been made through them, and a watch kept on all his actions. This, in fact, is the only explanation that can be given of the circumstance.

In answer to the demand for his luggage, Mr Bradlaugh at once produced his English passport, and assumed that this would suffice to shield him from further annoyance. The document was, however, treated with the profoundest contempt, and the Papal police now prepared to break open the portmanteau. In vain Mr Bradlaugh protested that he was under the flag of the two Sicilies, that he was not under nor subject to the Papal laws; the Papal gendarmes were undeterred by any such arguments. The position

was becoming desperate, and Mr Bradlaugh found himself terribly outnumbered; but he had learned the value of coolness, determination, and audacity.

Without any more argument, he set himself against his portmanteau, drew a heavy six-chambered naval revolver from his coat pocket, cocked, and aimed at the nearest Papal gendarme. He then simply and quietly promised to blow out the brains of the first individual who attempted to touch his luggage. In spite of this threat matters might have gone badly with him, for he was surrounded by foes, and there was the danger of an attack from behind. But at this juncture an American, who had been watching the whole incident with considerable interest, was so delighted at the "Britisher's pluck" that he suddenly snatched up a chair, and springing forward, took up a firm stand back to back with the Englishman, crying, while waving the chair about with fearful energy: "I guess I'll see fair play. You look after those in front, I'll attend to those behind!"

This turn of events somewhat disconcerted the Papal gendarmes. They did not like the look of Mr Bradlaugh's formidable weapon, and the American had destroyed all chance of seizing him by surprise from behind. They hesitated for some time how to proceed. At last they resolved to put the responsibility on others, and go on shore for further instructions. The moment they had left the ship Mr Bradlaugh employed this reprieve in bringing all the pressure possible to bear upon the captain, who was, after some trouble, persuaded to put on steam and sail out to sea before the gendarmes had time to return. A few days later my father reached London in safety, and had the satisfaction of delivering the letters.

Another story told in Mr Headingley's book* is very amusing; and although it has no bearing upon Mr Bradlaugh's political work, yet shows his resourcefulness and coolness in emergency.

"His experience with the Papal gendarmes had taught him the advantage of carrying a revolver when travelling in Italy, though this, it appears, was strictly against the Italian law, and on one occasion nearly resulted in serious consequences. The diligence in which Bradlaugh was travelling [between, as he often said with a wry face, two fat priests smelling strongly of garlic] from Nunzia-

* Page 103.

tella to Civitâ Vecchia had been entirely cleared out on the previous evening by a band of brigands. Bradlaugh consequently put his revolver in the pocket of the diligence door, where he thought it would be more readily accessible in case of attack. When, however, they stopped at Montalbo for the examination of the luggage and passports, the police discovered the revolver and were about to confiscate it. Bradlaugh at once tried to snatch the weapon back, and got hold of it by the barrel, while the policeman held tight to the butt—by far the safest side. In this position a fierce discussion ensued, Bradlaugh expostulating that so long as the Government were unable to protect travellers from brigands they should not object to persons who sought to defend themselves. This argument only drew reinforcements to the policeman's assistance, and Bradlaugh was seized and held tightly on all sides. Finally, Bradlaugh urged that it was his duty to the Life Assurance Company where he had insured himself to carry weapons, and protect his life by every possible means. This novel argument produced an unexpected and profound impression, particularly when he informed them that he was connected with the Sovereign and Midland Assurance Companies. The police respectfully and with minute care noted these names down. What they thought they meant Bradlaugh has never been able to explain; but they at once let him loose, and he triumphantly walked away, carrying with him his cherished revolver."

CHAPTER XVI.

PLATFORM WORK, 1860–1861.

On the third Monday in May 1860 Mr Bradlaugh commenced his second debate with the Rev. Brewin Grant, which was to be continued over four successive Mondays. The St George's Hall, Bradford, capable of holding 4000 persons, was taken for the discussion, and people attended from all the surrounding districts, and some even came in from the adjoining county of Lancashire. So much has been said as to the relative bearing and ability of these unlike men, to the disparagement of Mr Bradlaugh, that it will come as a surprise to many to learn that Mr Grant's language and conduct during this debate were condemned in the most unqualified terms by persons altogether unfriendly to his antagonist.*

---

* The *Leeds Times*, in a very unfriendly notice of the second night's debate at Bradford, said: "Mr Grant had declared there would be such fun, and . . . . he should exhibit the characters of some notorious infidels such as Paine, Carlile, Southwell, and others down to the last 'mushroom,' 'Iconoclast' himself, and prove from them that infidelity is the fruitful source of immorality and crime. All this he did in his opening half-hour's address, but where could anything like 'fun' be found in it all? . . . . Mr Grant in foisting such matter upon his audience was shirking the great points of the discussion. . . . . Mr Grant is anything but a calm and dispassionate disputant, and his indulgence in sarcasm even when unprovoked is ill calculated to check a tendency to personalities on the part of opponents, or to lead to the impartial investigation of the truth."

The *Bradford Review* had a short article on the four nights' discussion, and, speaking of the use of personalities, said: "Here we must say, justice obliges us to say that Mr Grant was the first and by far the greater offender in this direction. The language would not have been tolerated in any society. It was an outrage upon the ordinary proprieties and decencies of life."

The *Bradford Advertiser* was expressly hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, but in reviewing the four nights' debate also remarked: "We feel bound to concede that 'Iconoclast' acted with a dignity which contrasted very favourably as compared with Mr Grant. . . . . We are glad the course is at an end: we

In the fourth night of the debate, Mr Grant, harping on the alleged immoralities of Paine and Carlile, twitted his antagonist with calling him "my friend." When the time came for my father to reply, he rose, evidently in a white heat of anger, to defend these two great dead men from their living calumniator. His speech produced such an effect, not only upon the audience, but upon Mr Grant, that the latter grew quite uneasy under his words and under his gaze; he asked "Iconoclast" to look at the audience and not at him. Mr Bradlaugh replied: "I will take it that you are, as indeed you ought to be, ashamed to look an earnest man in the face, and I will look at you no more. Mr Grant complains that I have called him 'my friend.' It is true, in debate I have accustomed myself to wish all men my friends, and to greet them as friends if possible. The habit, like a garment, fits me, and I have in this discussion used the phrase 'my friend;' but, believe me, I did not mean it. Friendship with you would be a sore disgrace and little honour."

A verbatim report was taken of this debate; but when the MS. of his speeches was sent the Rev. Brewin Grant for approval, he refused to return it, and thus the debate was never published.

Another person who came forward to champion Christianity against "Infidels" generally, and Mr Bradlaugh in particular, was the Rev. Dr Brindley. This gentleman, well known as a confirmed drunkard and a bankrupt, was yet announced as the "Champion of Christianity, the well-known controversialist against Mr Robert Owen, and the Socialists, the Mormons, and the Secularists." A four nights' debate was arranged to take place at Oldham in June in the Working Men's Hall.

The meagre reports show nothing of any interest beyond the fact that on each evening there were enormous audiences. Mr Bradlaugh had another four nights' debate with Dr Brindley at

---

never attended a discussion where so little gentlemanly conduct was exhibited, or so much said that was vile and unworthy, especially from one professing to be a preacher and a practiser of Christ's teachings."

A letter in my possession, written to a friend by one of the audience immediately after the second night, gives a private view of the debate. He writes: "The debate was very hot last night; the excitement was great. Mr Grant's friends were disgusted with his conduct. At one time, when Mr Bradlaugh was speaking, Mr Grant put out his tongue at Mr Bradlaugh, and the audience cried 'Shame' to Mr Grant for his conduct."

Norwich a few months later, but this did not appear to be worth reporting at all. Dr Brindley was not by any means so clever as Mr Grant, nor did he use quite such scandalous language upon the public platform and to his adversary's face, although, if rumour did not belie him, he was more unrestrained both as to matter and manner when relieved of his antagonist's presence.* One thing at least he and Mr Grant had in common—an overwhelming antagonism to Mr Bradlaugh. This feeling led each man into continuous hostile acts, overt or covert, each according to his temperament and opportunity. Dr Brindley's rage amounted to fever heat when Mr Bradlaugh became candidate for Northampton, and in that town he frantically used every endeavour to hinder his return. When Mr Bradlaugh determined to go to America in 1873, Dr Brindley's feelings quite overpowered him, and he rushed after his enemy to New York, with, I suppose, some sort of idea of hunting down the wicked Atheist, though really, looking back on the past, it is difficult to see that the poor creature could have had any clear ideas as to what he was going to do to Mr Bradlaugh when he reached America. He must have been carried away by some sort of wild frenzy, which amounted to insanity. My father's first lecture upon the Republican Movement in England, at the Steinway Hall, New York, proved to be an immense success, and at its close Dr Brindley offered some opposition. By his language he aroused such a storm of hisses and uproar, that Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to interpose on his behalf, which he did by appealing to the audience "to let the gentleman who represents the aristocracy and the Church of England go on." This convulsed the assembly, who—in laughter and amusement—consented to hear the rev. gentleman out. Four days later Dr Brindley publicly answered Mr Bradlaugh at the Cooper Institute, and the *Germantown Chronicle* (Philadelphia) gives the following amusing account of the proceedings:—

"Brindley's purpose in life is to go for Bradlaugh hammer and tongs, and he has actually paid his way out here, cabin passage, to hunt up and show up and finally shut up the six foot leader of the English Radicals. He is determined to keep on after Bradlaugh hot foot, and wherever that eminent individual leaves a trace of his presence, there will the indefatigable Brindley be, with his orthodox whitewash brush, to wipe

* This, I gather, did not apply to his attitude to Mr Bradlaugh only.

out the name and memory of his Freethinking countryman. Dr Brindley is an interesting orator, and the most simple-minded Briton that has presented himself at the Cooper Institute for some time. His voice is as funny as a Punch and Judy's, and when the audience of last night roared with laughter, it was impossible to tell whether it was at what Brindley had said, or Brindley's method and voice in saying it. Some of the audience were beery, and disposed to ask beery questions. The speaker said England was full of wealth, and that labour was never so well paid. Everybody was happy, and Bradlaugh was an incendiary, a story-teller, a nuisance, who would make a rumpus and make everybody miserable, even in the Garden of Eden. 'Were you ever in a casual ward?' asked a smudgy fellow in the back of the hall. 'No,' answered the bold Brindley, 'but if you were there now it would save the police trouble.' And so he replied to other impertinent questions, until he made the impression that he was not quite such a fool as he looked. He said Bradlaugh was an Atheist, whose belief is that 'brain power is the only soul in man,' and that as he was played out in England he had come over here to air his theories, and pick up pennies. 'You know where Cheshire is?' said Brindley, 'Cheshire, where the cheese is made,' and Brindley was about to tell a story on this head, when a donkey at the back end of the hall cried out, 'There ain't no cheese made there now. It's all done in Duchess county.' No telling what a good thing this fellow spoiled by his remark. Bradlaugh, anyhow, was scalped and vivisected, and Brindley took his tomahawk and himself away soon after."

But the farce was to end in a tragedy. Overcome by chagrin and mortification, Dr Brindley died within a month of his appearance on the Steinway Hall platform. He died in New York in poverty and neglect, and was buried in a pauper's grave. The *Chicago Times*, alluding to the terms of Mr Bradlaugh's appeal to the New York audience to give Dr Brindley a hearing, said that the rev. gentleman was "slain by satire." "Since Keats, according to Byron, was snuffed out by a single article, there has been no parallel except this of a human creature snuffed out by a single sentence."

Following quickly upon the heels of the debate at Oldham with Dr Brindley came one with the Rev. Joseph Baylee, D.D., Principal of St Aidan's College, Birkenhead. Dr Baylee himself proposed the conditions on which alone he would consent to discuss. These conditions threw the entire trouble and expense of the three nights' discussion upon Mr Bradlaugh's committee. They provided that Dr Baylee and his friends might open and conclude

the proceedings with prayer, and they also provided that the debate should consist of questions and categorical answers with no speeches whatever on either side. Those who recall Mr Bradlaugh's marvellous rapidity of thought, and the way in which he could instantly grasp and reason out a position, will see that this condition would certainly be no disadvantage to my father. The audiences, as usual, crowded the hall, and listened to both speakers with the utmost attention. This discussion, which was reported at length and published in pamphlet form,* has had a very wide circulation. It is in many respects a remarkable debate; but as it is easily obtainable, I will leave it to speak for itself, more especially as, from its peculiar form of question and answer, it does not lend itself conveniently to quotation.

Were it possible it would be tedious to follow Mr Bradlaugh through the hundreds of lectures which he delivered during these ten years, but it will be interesting, and will give us a clearer idea of the turmoil and work of his life, to note some of the difficulties he had to meet thirty or so years ago. Nowadays, as soon as Parliament rises nearly every member of the House of Commons thinks himself called upon to go and air his views throughout the length and breadth of the country; then, public speaking was much more uncommon, and Freethought lectures in especial were few and far between. To-day, almost every town of any size has its own Freethought speakers, and speakers come to it with more or less frequency from adjoining districts and from London. Little difficulties create great stir and excitement now: then, great difficulties came almost as a matter of course. But even when difficulties were frequent and not altogether unexpected, that did not make them the easier to endure. A brick-bat which reaches its aim hurts just as much whether it is one out of many thrown or just one thrown by itself.

At Wigan, in October 1860, my father went to deliver two lectures in the Commercial Hall. The conduct of the people in this town was so disgraceful, that he said in bitter jest that if he did much more of this "extended propaganda" he should require to be insured against accident to life and limb.

"I may be wrong," he wrote,† "but I shall never be convinced

* God, Man, and the Bible. Three nights' discussion with the Rev. Dr Baylee.

† *National Reformer*, October 20, 1860.

of my error by a mob of true believers yelling at my heels like mad dogs, under the leadership of a pious rector's trusty subordinate, or hammering at the door of my lecture room under the direction of an infuriated Church parson. I object that in the nineteenth century it is hardly to be tolerated that a bigot priest shall use his influence with the proprietor of the hotel where I am staying, in order to 'get that devil kicked out into the street' after half-past ten at night. I do not admit the right of a rich Church dignitary's secretary to avoid the payment of his threepence at the door by jumping through a window, especially when I or my friends have to pay for the broken glass and sash frame. True, all these things and worse happened at Wigan."

There had been no Freethought lectures in Wigan for upwards of twenty years; the clergy had had it all their own way there undisturbed. They determined to oppose the wicked Iconoclast in every way, and began by engaging the largest hall available and advertising the same subjects as those announced for the Freethought platform. Had they contented themselves with this form of opposition, all would have been well, but their zeal outran discretion, carrying with it their manners and all appearance of decency and decorum. My father, continuing his account of this affair, said—

"Being unknown in Wigan, except by hearsay, I expected therefore but a moderate audience. I was in this respect agreeably disappointed. The hall was inconveniently crowded, and many remained outside in the square, unable to obtain admittance. No friend was known to me who could or would officiate as chairman, and I therefore appealed to the meeting to elect their own president. No response being made to this, I intimated my intention of proceeding without one. This the Christians did not seem to relish, and therefore elected a gentleman named [the Rev. T.] Dalton to the chair, who was very tolerable, except that he had eccentric views of a chairman's duty, and slightly shortened my time, while he also took a few minutes every now and then for himself to refute my objections to the Bible."

With the exception of the excitable and somewhat unmannerly behaviour of some of the clergymen present, this meeting passed off without any serious disturbance, and was not unfairly reported by the *Wigan Observer*, which described "Mr Iconoclast" as "a well-made and healthy looking man, apparently not more than

thirty years of age. He possesses great fluency of speech, and is evidently well posted up in the subject of his addresses. Of assurance he has no lack; and we scarcely think it would be possible to put a question to him to which he had not an answer ready—good, bad, or indifferent."

By the following evening the temper of the Wiganites had become—what shall I say? More Christian? Mr Bradlaugh, when he arrived at the hall, "found it crowded to excess, and in addition many hundreds outside unable to gain admittance. My name," he says, "was the subject of loud and hostile comment, several pious Christians in choice Billingsgate intimating that they would teach me a lesson. As on the previous evening, I requested the religious body to elect a chairman, and Mr Thomas Stuart was voted to the chair. Of this gentleman I must say that he was courteous, generous, and manly, and by his kindly conduct compelled my respect and admiration. Previous to my lecture the majority of those present hooted and yelled with a vigour which, if it betokened healthy lungs, did not vouch so well for a healthy brain; and I commenced my address amidst a terrific din. Each window was besieged, and panes of glass were dashed out in mere reckless wantonness, while at the same time a constant hammering was kept up at the main door. As this showed no prospect of cessation, I went myself to the door, and, to my disgust, found that the disturbance was being fostered and encouraged by a clergyman * of the Church of England, who wished to gain admittance. I told him loss of life might follow any attempt to enter the room in its present overcrowded state. His answer was that he knew there was plenty of room, and would come in. To prevent worse strife I admitted him, and by dint of main strength and liberal use of my right arm repelled the others, closed the doors, and returned to the platform. I had, however, at the doors received one blow in the ribs, which, coupled with the extraordinary exertions required to keep the meeting in check, fairly tired me out in about an hour. Several times, when any crash betokened a new breach in either door or window, the whole of the audience toward the end of the room jumped up, and I had literally to keep them down by dint of energetic lung power. Towards the conclusion of the lecture, the secretary of the rector forced his

* The Rev. W. T. Whitehead.

way bodily through a window, and I confess I felt a strong inclination to go to that end of the room and pitch him back through the same aperture. If he had intended a riot, he could not have acted more riotously. Some limestone was thrown in at another window, and a little water was poured through the ventilators by some persons who had gained possession of the roof. This caused some merriment, which turned to alarm when an arm and hand waving a dirty rag appeared through a little hole in the centre of the ceiling. One man in a wideawake then jumped upon one of the forms, and excitedly shouted to me, 'See, the devil has come for you!' After the lecture, I received in the confusion several blows, but none of importance. When I quitted the building one well-dressed man asked me, 'Do you not expect God to strike you dead, and don't you deserve that the people should serve you out for your blasphemy?' Two spat in my face."

Being concerned for the fate of the hotel if he carried back with him the excited crowds which dogged his heels, Mr Bradlaugh's first impulse was to avoid it; but remembering that he had left all his money there, he contrived to escape his pursuers, and reached the hotel unaccompanied, except by one friend. Notwithstanding that there was not "the slightest disturbance at the hotel, the landlady wished me at once to leave the house. I appealed to her hospitality in vain. I next stood on my legal rights, went to my bedroom, locked the door, retired to bed, and tried to dream that Wigan was a model Agapemone."

Before the dispersal of the meeting, and while the Rev. W. T. Whitehead was asking the audience to teach Mr Bradlaugh a lesson which should prevent him coming again, whether intentionally or not, the gas was turned off, so that the hundreds of persons in the room, already in confusion, were placed in great danger of losing their lives. Fortunately, the gas was relighted before any serious consequences had resulted.

About a month later Mr Bradlaugh was again speaking at Wigan. The Mayor had threatened to lock him up, but, as might be expected, the threat was an empty one. The *Wigan Examiner* entreated the public not to attend the lectures, but without result. On the first evening a form was set aside for the accommodation of the clergy, but it remained vacant. After the meeting (which had been a fairly orderly one) Mr Bradlaugh relates how he was followed to

his lodgings "by a mob who had not been present at the lecture, and who yelled and shouted in real collier fashion. The *Examiner* says they intended to 'purr' me.* An invitation on my part to any two of them to settle the matter with me in approved pugilistic fashion produced a temporary lull, under cover of which shelter was gained from the storm of hooting and howling which soon broke out anew with redoubled vigour. On the second evening the Christian mob outside were even more discourteous." Some friends † who had offered Mr Bradlaugh the hospitality of their roof, so that he might not again suffer the treatment he had received at the Victoria Hotel on the former occasion, were threatened and annoyed in a most disgraceful manner, besides being hissed and hooted on entering the lecture hall. Stones were thrown at Mr Bradlaugh and Mr John Watts as they went in, but during the lecture all was orderly. At the end, however, Mr Hutchings, a Nonconformist and the sub-editor of the *Examiner*, amidst considerable noise and confusion, entered with the Rev. J. Davis and other friends, to contradict what Mr Bradlaugh had said on the previous night. After some animated discussion, it was arranged that a set two nights' debate should be held between them. Mr Bradlaugh then left the hall, and was immediately surrounded by a noisy crew.

"I walked slowly home," said my father. "At last, in a narrow court, one fellow kicked me in the back part of my thigh. I turned quickly round, and invited an attempt at repetition, promising prepayment in a good knock-down for the kicker; and the whole pack of yelping religionists turned tail. Men and women turned out of their houses half-dressed, and when the name 'Iconoclast' passed from one to the other, the adjectives attached to it sufficiently proved that humanising influences were sorely needed to soften the conversational exuberance of the natives of Wigan."

Those who were not sufficiently brave to come near enough to give a kick at Mr Bradlaugh's back hurled bricks at him, but cowardice unnerved them and prevented them from taking a good aim, so that although his hat was damaged, he himself was unhurt. Mr and Mrs Johnson courageously insisted upon walking

---

* C. Bradlaugh in the *National Reformer* for December 1st, 1860.

† Mr and Mrs Johnson of Wigan.

by his side, and the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus thought it no shame to throw stones at a woman: here, their victim being weaker, their courage was accordingly greater and their aim straighter. But if the people acted so merely from ignorance and narrowness, it is not so easy to explain the malevolent attitude of certain local journals to my father. Week after week, the *Wigan Examiner* persisted in the attack, being especially virulent in its onslaught upon his personal character. It reprinted Mr Packer's mendacious letter to Brewin Grant, and the following extract prefacing the letter will serve to show how great was the desire of the editor to keep the commandments of his Deity, and not to bear false witness :—

"Born in the classic region of Bethnal Green, he [Mr Bradlaugh] devoted his juvenile faculties to the advocacy of teetotalism, but finding that this theme did not afford sufficient scope for his genius, he formed (*sic*) himself to a select band of reformers who met in an upper room or garret in the neighbourhood. Being a fluent speaker, he was soon exalted to the dignity of an apostle in his new vocation, and finding the work in every respect much more congenial to his mind than weaving, he broke loose from all restraint, and went into the new business with energy."

The debate between Mr Hutchings and Mr Bradlaugh was finally arranged for the 4th and 5th February (1861). On his way to the hall on the first evening, my father received "one evidence of Christianity in the shape of a bag of flour;" this was, of course, intended to soil his clothes, but "fortunately it was flung with too great violence, and after crushing the side of another new hat from Mr Hipwell,* covered the pavement instead of myself. I shall need a special fund for hats," wrote Mr Bradlaugh, "if I visit Wigan often." On his return from the debate, although he was followed by a large crowd of men and boys, all hooting was quickly suppressed, and was, in fact, attempted only by a very few. On his first visit to Wigan he had "retired to rest, not only without friends to bid me good-night, but with many a score of loud-tongued, rough lads and men bidding me, in phraseology startling and effective, everything but so kindly a farewell;" † but during the three months which

* A Freethinking hatter of Bradford.

† C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, February 16, 1861.

had elapsed since Mr Bradlaugh's earliest visit to this Lancashire mining town public feeling had considerably changed and modified; and in the evening, the house where he was staying "was crowded out," he tells us, "with rough but honest earnest men and women, who insisted, one and all, in gripping my hand in friendliness, and wishing me good speed in my work. The change was so great that a tear mounted to my eye despite myself." His was always the same sensitive nature; he was ever moved to the heart by a sign of true sympathy or real affection. Persecution found him stern and unflinching, hypocrisy found him severe and unforgiving, but kindness or affection instantly touched the fountain of his gratitude and his tenderness.

Out of this debate, which contains nothing particularly noteworthy,* arose a lawsuit. The reporter, a person named Stephenson M. Struthers, after having sold "the transcript" to Mr Bradlaugh at 8d. per folio, sold a second copy of his notes to Mr William Heaton, on behalf of Mr Hutchings' Committee, for 3 guineas. This my father did not discover until he had used some of the copy, and paid Struthers £5 on account. He then refused to pay the balance (£11, 16s.), and for this the shorthand-writer sued him. Mr Bradlaugh expressed his willingness to pay for the labour involved in making a copy; but he objected to pay for the *sole* copy when he had not received that for which he had contracted. The suit came on in the Wigan County Court, before J. S. T. Greene, Esq., on April 11th (1861). After the case for the plaintiff was closed, Mr Bradlaugh entered the witness-box to be sworn—at that time the only form under which he could give evidence. Mr Mayhew (for the plaintiff), after some preamble as to not desiring to be offensive, asked "with regret" if Mr Bradlaugh believed "in the religious obligations of an oath?"

* The following short passage from this debate may serve as an example of the incisive eloquence of which my father was capable at the age of eight-and-twenty :—

"Men say, 'I believe. Believe in what? 'I believe' is the prostration of the intellect before the unknown—not an exertion of the intellect to grasp the knowable. Men who have taught in Sunday Schools, and children who have been taught there, men worshipping in our churches—men following men in this way have their ideas made for them, fitted on to them like their clothes; and, like the parrot in its gilded cage, they say 'I believe,' because they have been taught to say it, and not because they have a vital faith when they do say it."

Mr Bradlaugh objected to answer any question until he was sworn. The Judge would not allow the objection; and after a considerable interchange of opinion and question and answer between the Judge and Mr Bradlaugh, in which the latter explicitly stated his readiness to be sworn, he asked to be allowed to affirm. This the Judge refused to permit. And this is how the episode ended:—

The JUDGE: Only give me a direct answer.

Mr BRADLAUGH: I am not answering your question at all. I have objected on two grounds, both of which your Honour has overruled, that I am not bound to answer the question.

The JUDGE: If you put it in that way, I should be sorry to exercise any power that I believe I possess according to law. You won't answer the question?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that I am not bound to answer any question that will criminate myself.

The JUDGE: You will not answer my question. Do you believe in the existence of a supreme God?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that the answer, if in the negative, would subject me to a criminal prosecution.

The JUDGE: Do you believe in a state of future rewards and punishments?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that—

The JUDGE: Then I shall not permit you to give evidence at all; and I think you escape very well in not being sent to gaol.

The Judge, having thus taken advantage of his magisterial position to insult a defenceless man as well as to refuse his evidence, proceeded with consummate injustice to sum it up as an "undefended case," and gave a verdict for the plaintiff for the full amount. After the case was over, Mr William Heaton wrote to Mr Bradlaugh denying a material point in Mr Struthers' sworn evidence as to what had occurred between them. Thus did the laws of Christian England treat an Atheist as outlaw, and in the name of justice deal out injustice in favour of a man who, as his fellow Christian stated, had spoken falsely under his oath in the witness-box.

Mr Hutchings himself felt the disgrace of this so keenly that he wrote expressing his desire to co-operate in a public movement in Wigan in favour of Sir John Trelawny's Affirmation Bill. "I do feel strongly," he said, "that you were most wrongfully and iniquitously deprived of the opportunity of defending your

cause, and this I feel the more strongly that it was done in strict conformity with English law."

Two other polemical encounters arose directly out of the Wigan lectures; these were both held with the Rev. Woodville Woodman, a Swedenborgian divine. The first, at Wigan, upon the "Existence of God," continued over four nights; the second, upon the "Divine Revelation of the Bible," also a four nights' debate, was held at Ashton in the autumn of the same year.

Mr Bradlaugh held quite a number of theological discussions about this time. In addition to those I have already mentioned with the Rev. Brewin Grant, Dr Brindley, Dr Baylee, Mr Hutchings, and the Rev. Woodville Woodman, a controversial correspondence between himself and the Rev. Thomas Lawson, a Baptist minister of Bacup, arose out of some lectures delivered by Mr Bradlaugh in Newchurch in October 1860. It was originally intended to hold a set debate upon the subject "Has Man a Soul?" but no hall could be obtained in Bacup for the purposes of the discussion. The correspondence was therefore published in the *National Reformer* during the spring of the following year. Then a debate upon the credibility of the Gospels was arranged between Mr Bradlaugh and the Rev. J. H. Rutherford, and was held in Liverpool in October 1860; another upon "What does the Bible teach about God?" was held with Mr Mackie in Warrington in April 1861; and a few months later my father also debated for two nights at Birmingham with Mr Robert Mahalm, a representative of the Irish Church Mission in that town.

In the middle of July (1860) he was lecturing for the first time in Norwich. St Andrew's Hall was taken, and the proceeds of the lecture were to go to Garibaldi; but this was one of the places where religious prejudice was strong, and where therefore the receipts did not equal the expenditure. On the second evening Mr Bradlaugh delivered an open-air address at Chapel Field, when "yells, hisses, abuse, a little mud, and a few stones formed the chorus and finale of the entertainment." Nothing daunted, in September he went to Norwich again, and the orderly behaviour of his audience formed a marked contrast to their previous conduct. By November, when he once more visited Norwich, the Freethinkers there had found themselves strong enough to hire a commodious chapel for the winter months, substituting a piano for the communion table. From Norwich his steps turned

naturally to Yarmouth, where he was much amused by hearing the town crier follow up his "Oyez! Oyez!" by the announcement that "the cel-e-bra-ted I-con-o-clast" had arrived.

Only a few weeks elapsed before Mr Bradlaugh again went to Norwich and Yarmouth. He went the week immediately before Christmas, and had an eight hours' journey to get there, with the driving snow coming through "the Eastern Counties Railway Company's patent [3rd class] ventilating carriages," which seemed constructed with the express object of making "perfectly clear to the unfortunate passengers the criminality of their poverty." This, his fourth visit to Norwich, was a great success, and the lectures at Yarmouth were also more favourably listened to. By January he found his audiences increasing at Norwich, and the interest perceptibly growing, but at Yarmouth he received a check. There had been much commotion in the local official circles at the repeated visits of the Atheist lecturer, and pressure was used on all sides, so that only a small sale room in a back street could be hired for the lectures. The room was soon overcrowded; Mr Bradlaugh had to be his own chairman, and on going home walked to the music of yells and hootings. This display of intolerance roused up some of the more thoughtful inhabitants, and the theatre was obtained for the following night, when, despite the necessarily brief notice, a large audience—including many ladies—assembled to hear the lecture. A Mr Fletcher was elected to the chair, the proceedings were orderly throughout, and Mr Bradlaugh walked home unmolested.

The matter, however, was not to end here. Both the Yarmouth clergy (or at least *one* Yarmouth clergyman, the Rev. E. Neville) and magistrates expressed their determination that the lectures must be put down, and so Mr Bradlaugh received information that proceedings were to be taken against him for blasphemy. The *Norfolk News* and *Yarmouth Independent* for March 23rd reported a meeting of magistrates at which the subject of "Iconoclast's" visits was under discussion, the letting of the theatre to him was severely commented upon, and the persons responsible for the letting held up to public odium. Not one of the nine or ten magistrates present could be found to say a word on behalf of the Atheist; and the speeches of the Mayor, Mr S. Nightingale, and one other of the magistrates, Mr Hammond, from which I quote, are typical of the attitude of the rest:—

"He [the Mayor] had attended the bench that morning (Tuesday, March 19) because he had observed bills circulated in the town setting forth that 'that wretched man calling himself "Iconoclast"'* intended to give lectures again at the theatre. He really thought 'Iconoclast' was doing a great deal of mischief in the minds of the younger part of the community, and he thought they ought to take some steps to prevent it. He some time ago called the attention of their clerk to the subject, who had proceeded to look into the law of the case. It seemed monstrous to him that a man should be allowed to utter blasphemy as 'Iconoclast' was doing and for them not to interfere. . . . . He wished the magistrates to take some steps for putting a stop to these lectures."

The Mayor found an ardent supporter in Mr Hammond, who

"thought the thanks of the town were due to His Worship for bringing the subject before the notice of the bench. He had thought of it yesterday himself, and spoken to one or two of the magistrates on the matter, and he also intended to call on the Mayor about it, had he not gone into it. It was evident that Mr Sidney [the lessee of the theatre]—at least he (Mr Hammond) thought—could not know what he was letting the theatre for. He (Mr Hammond) was part proprietor of the theatre himself; but rather than take any part of the profits arising out of such a purpose, he would sooner see it shut up for twenty years. If no other magistrate would do it, he would move that Mr Sidney be refused his licence next year, should these diabolical practices be allowed at the theatre. He perceived from the large bill issued that the front boxes were to be 6d., the upper boxes 4d., the pit 3d., and the gallery 2d.; and it must be evident to the magistrates that the thing must be disreputable indeed to have a place like the theatre let in that way—to have the public mind poisoned by a repetition of these lectures, perhaps by-and-by at 2d. each, as an inducement to lead the young away that they might hear the Holy Scriptures set at nought. He felt very sensitive on the point, and so far as his humble assistance went, he would give it to put a stop to these nefarious practices. He felt personally obliged to the Mayor for bringing forward the subject that morning, and he hoped every magistrate on the bench would lend a helping hand towards putting a stop to the nuisance. (Applause.)"

At the conclusion of the proceedings, Mr Nightingale (the Mayor) observed "that he felt determined to put a stop to these exhibitions."†

---

* The Mayor's exact words.

† The *Norfolk News* prefaces its account by saying: "For some months past considerable excitement has been caused amongst the religious community of the town by the delivery of lectures tending to subvert the fundamental principles of Christianity by a Freethinker under the *soubriquet* of 'Iconoclast.' We have attended none of these lectures ourselves, but,

In a leaderette the local journal commented strongly on the course proposed by the wise and learned Dogberries; and when Mr Bradlaugh placarded Yarmouth with an address to the magistrates accepting the gauntlet thus thrown down, and expressing his resolve to lecture within their jurisdiction, it spoke of the "spirited reply" which he had addressed to his would-be persecutors. The upshot of all this was that my father immediately determined to devote a special week to East Anglia, commencing with two nights at Yarmouth.

"On my arrival at Yarmouth," he wrote, "I found myself literally hunted from room to room. The theatre being closed against me, the Masonic Hall was taken, but the mayor personally waited upon the proprietor, and the 'screw' being put on I was also deprived of this room. I was determined not to be beaten, and therefore hired a large bleaching-ground in which to deliver an open-air address." There were present about 1000 persons, "including at least one magistrate and several police officers," and it may be noted as most significant that the action of the magistrates did not meet with popular favour, that the meeting concluded with cheers for Mr Bradlaugh and for the owner of the ground. On the following evening the audience was largely increased, and numbered at least 5000 persons, who were orderly and attentive throughout. Outside the meeting there was stone-throwing, principally by boys. One of the stones struck my mother, who, identifying the lad who threw it, threatened to give him into custody. At which the lad answered, "Oh, please, mum, you cannot; the police have told us to make all the noise, and throw as many stones as we can." This, we will hope, was a liberal interpretation of the police instructions, but at least it shows very strongly that the lads had reason to expect the police to look very leniently upon their escapades. The magisterial bluster ended in bluster, and the only result to Yarmouth from a Christian standpoint was a pamphlet against "Infidelity" written by a Charles Houchen, and whether that can be set down to the credit of

---

judging from what we have heard, we should think that 'Iconoclast' was a gifted man so far as regards his elocutionary powers. He has been combated on his own platform, denounced from various pulpits in the town, and at length a determined effort seems to have been made to shut him out from all the places in the town in which a public meeting could be held."

Christianity we must leave it to the followers of that creed to judge. Mr Houchen said—

"It has been asked what is the real object of Iconoclast going from place to place, and coming to Yarmouth from time to time, and the answer has been money, money. Now, I ask the reader what think you, whoever you be, suppose Iconoclast himself was guaranteed to be better paid than he now is for travelling from place to place, do you not think he would turn round?"

To this my father rejoined that "the whole amount of Iconoclast's receipts from Yarmouth has not equalled his payments for board, lodging, and printing in that eastern seaport; that he has journeyed to and fro at his own cost; and that if his object 'has been money, money,' he has suffered grievous disappointment, and this not because the audiences have been small, but because of that 'rarity of Christian charity' which shut him out of theatre and lecture-hall after each had been duly hired, and prompted policemen to connive at stone-throwing when directed against an Infidel lecturer."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DEVONPORT CASE, 1861.

In the early sixties the Freethinkers of Plymouth were a fairly active body; their hall, the "Free Institute," in Buckland Street, they owed to the liberality of one of their members, Mr Johns, and there were some tolerably energetic spirits to carry on the work. At that time Mr George J. Holyoake was a great favourite in the Western towns, and Mr Bradlaugh was fast winning his way. He was gaining public popularity and private friendships on all sides, when an incident occurred which brought out some of his most striking characteristics and rivetted some of these friendships with links of steel.

He had arranged to lecture at Plymouth for five days during the first week in December 1860. The first three and the last of these lectures were given in the Free Institute; but that for the Thursday was announced to be given in Devonport Park. At the appointed time a considerable number of people had assembled, and Mr Bradlaugh was just about to address them when he was accosted by the Superintendent of the Devonport Police, who stated that he was authorised by the Town Council to prevent such lectures, and "all such proceedings in a place created alone for the recreation of the public." Mr Bradlaugh pointed out that the Temperance advocates used the Park; why should not he? Mr Edwards, the Police Superintendent, not only refused to argue the matter, but said further that if Mr Bradlaugh persisted in his lecture he should use measures to eject him from the Park. There was a little more talk, during which Mr Bradlaugh reflected that he was by no means certain as to what were his rights in the Park; and in the end he decided not to lecture there that evening. To use his own words, he "submitted, but with a determination to do better at some future time." Mr John Williamson (now in Colorado), writing at the time, says: "On Monday, the 3rd, Icono-

clast arrived by the 5 p.m. train, very much fatigued, and looking ill; he had to go to bed for a couple of hours before lecturing . . . . during his stay he suffered much from neuralgia, which interfered with his rest by night." These few words as to the state of my father's health will give us some idea of the strain upon him in all these stormy scenes, added to the anxiety of earning his living. A comparison of dates will show that many of these episodes ran concurrently, although I am obliged to tell them separately for the sake of clearness. I take these incidents in order of their origin; but while one was passing through its different stages others began and ended. In addition to these more important struggles, there was also many a small matter which as yet I have left untouched. All this must be borne in mind by readers of these pages who wish to get a clear idea of Mr Bradlaugh's life. My pen, unfortunately, can only set down one thing at a time, though careful reading can fill in the picture.

The prohibition at Devonport Park was merely a sort of prologue; the real drama was to come, and the first act was played exactly three months later. Mr Bradlaugh had, as he said, determined "to do better at some future time;" with this end in view he set aside a fortnight early in March, to be devoted to the conquest of Plymouth, and the campaign opened on Sunday the 3rd.

A field known as the "Parson's Field," or "Parsonage Field," adjoining Devonport Park, was hired in February for "two lectures by a representative of the Plymouth and Devonport Secular Society," for the first two Sundays in March. Accordingly, about half-past two on the afternoon of Sunday the 3rd, Mr Bradlaugh went thither accompanied by two friends, Mr Steed and Mr John Williamson. He took his place upon a gravel heap, and was just about to speak, when he was informed that the police were coming into the field, and on looking round he saw Mr Edwards (the Superintendent), Mr Inspector Bryant, and several constables. Mr Edwards forbade him to proceed with his lecture, saying that he had authority to remove him from the field. Mr Bradlaugh answered that he had given way in Devonport Park because he was then uncertain as to his rights; now the Superintendent had no right to interfere; he had an agreement with the owner of the field; he was the tenant, and there he should remain unless he was removed by force. He thereupon turned to

the audience and commenced his lecture with these words: "Friends, I am about to address you on the Bible——." His speech was here brought to an abrupt conclusion, for, acting under the orders of the Superintendent, he was seized by six policemen,* of whom he said:—

"Two attended to each arm, the remaining two devoting themselves to the rear of my person. One, D. 19, I should think had served an apprenticeship at garrotting, by the peculiar manner in which he handled my neck. Our friends around were naturally indignant, so that I had the threefold task to perform of pacifying my friends to prevent a breach of the peace, of keeping my own temper, and yet of exerting my own physical strength sufficiently to show the police that I would not permit a continuance of excessive violence. In fact, I was obliged to explain that I possessed the will to knock one or two of them down, and the ability to enforce that will, before I could get anything like reasonable treatment."

D. 19 in particular made himself very objectionable; twice Mr Bradlaugh asked him to remove his hand from the inside of his collar, but D. 19 would not, so at length he had to shake him off. When the six policemen, aided by their Superintendent and Inspector, succeeded in getting Mr Bradlaugh out of the field, Inspector Bryant told him to go about his business. He replied, "My business here to-day is to lecture; if you let me go, I shall go back to the field." The Superintendent said that in that case he would take him to the Station-house. Mr Bradlaugh, who was all this time bareheaded in the keen air of early March, asked for his hat. Mr Williamson stepped forward to hand it to him, but was pushed roughly aside by the police, and Mr Bradlaugh did not get his hat till later.

At the Police Station he was detained for some time whilst the question of bail was under discussion. This was twice refused, once on the ground that there was no power to accept bail on a Sunday; and after being subjected to the indignity of being searched, Mr Bradlaugh was taken into an underground

* It is not without interest to note the number of police that were always employed when there was any question of forcibly removing Mr Bradlaugh. The Devonport superintendent contented himself with six. Twenty years later the House of Commons employed fourteen—at least, I am told that it was eleven policemen and three messengers.

stone cell, without fire, light, chair, or stool. In the cell there was "a straw palliasse, with a strange looking rug and one sheet." This cell, it afterwards transpired, had not been used for two years. In this dungeon-like place he was kept for four and a-half hours, from half-past four until nine o'clock on an evening in the beginning of March. At this hour the Superintendent allowed him the luxury of a stone corridor in which there was a fire; he was placed here in charge of a policemen, and also allowed the company of Mr Steer, a Freethinker, who had attended the meeting and had been taken into custody on a charge of assaulting Mr Edwards while "in the execution of his duty." Mr Bradlaugh was at the outset charged with inciting to a breach of the peace, but on Monday was also further charged with an assault upon Mr Edwards. In the morning he and Mr Steer were brought up, like felons, through a trap-door into the prisoner's dock. Their appearance in court was greeted with a hearty burst of cheering, which the magistrates (of whom there were not less than nine upon the bench) tried in vain to suppress. The Court was very full, and such a great crowd had assembled outside the Guildhall, previous to the opening of the doors, that the Mayor (J. W. W. Ryder, Esq.) decided that the Court ordinarily used for police business was too small, and that the case should be heard in the large hall. The case was opened by Mr Little, of the firm of Messrs Little and Woolcombe, on behalf of the plaintiff, Mr Superintendent Edwards. After he had recited the charges, he said he was instructed by the magnanimous Edwards that he had no desire "to press strongly against the parties, if they would make a promise not again to make an attack upon public morals." Once or twice during the progress of the case, Mr Bradlaugh came into collision with Mr Bone, the magistrate's clerk, but on the whole he carried his points fairly easily. The case lasted the whole day right into the evening, and was adjourned to Friday the 8th to give Mr Bradlaugh time to procure evidence. He and Mr Steer were bound over in their own recognizances of £20 each.

The Court was again crowded on Friday, every part of the building being crammed, and the spectators included several dissenting ministers of various denominations. When Mr Bradlaugh made his appearance in the dock he was, as before, greeted with tremendous and repeated cheering. The magistrate's clerk got

quite excited, and called out again and again, "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves." The Mayor commanded the police to keep their eyes on the persons guilty of such manifestations, and to take them into custody if necessary. During the course of the proceedings he gave this order several times in one form or another, and succeeded in provoking a considerable burst of laughter, as occasionally nearly every person in Court was cheering or hissing according to his sentiments, and the Superintendent could hardly have afforded six constables to capture each disturber. However, at my father's request, his friends ceased to cheer. The charge against Mr Bradlaugh was dismissed without hearing the whole of the evidence for the defence.* The magistrates found Mr Steer guilty, but said that they did not consider the assault to have been of a severe character, and therefore fined him only 5s. and costs, not to include attorney's costs. Of course, the question of religious belief was

---

* The descriptions of Mr Bradlaugh which appeared in some of the Devonshire papers, and the opinions expressed in them, are rather amusing to read now, so many years after they were written. The *Devonport Telegraph* said that Mr Bradlaugh was twenty-eight years of age, and his cross-examinations were such "as would have done credit to an able barrister."

The *Western Morning News* said that he was "apparently about thirty-four years of age, and 5 ft. 10 ins. in height, is stoutly built, of a sallow complexion, and his countenance is adorned with neither whiskers nor moustache. He possesses intelligent features, and a commanding forehead, and he wears his hair brushed behind his ears. . . . . His examination of the witnesses was conducted with facility and with much regularity. . . . . He sustained his equanimity of temper in an admirable manner."

The *Devonport Independent*, referring to the presence in Court of the various dissenting ministers and others, said "they could not help admiring his [Mr Bradlaugh's] remarkable precision, his calm and collected demeanour, and the ability with which he 'conducted his own case' as well as that of his friend. . . . . He is about twenty-eight years of age, slight, and of a fair complexion, above the ordinary height, and bearing the impress of an intelligent countenance."

The *Plymouth Mail* thought "the infidel lecturer Bradlaugh and his friend Steer got off easily."

The *Western Daily Mercury* gave very full reports of the trial, and under the heading "Scandala Maguata" wrote a condemnation of the prosecution. It also inserted a number of letters on both sides: one, from "an old subscriber," who described himself as "the father of a family and lover of the truths of Scripture," wished that the inhabitants had "routed the wicked man Bradlaugh out of the neighbourhood," and expressed a desire that the Government should punish the dockyard men who co-operated with Bradlaugh.

raised on the swearing of the witnesses for the defence, but the only two who were questioned happened to be religious persons—one, indeed, was an "Independent Nonconformist," who was on his way to chapel, and was attracted to the field by the crowd and the presence of the police. On the following day (March 9th) notices were served by the authorities, representing the War Department in Devonport, on the Plymouth Freethinkers and others concerned, forbidding the use of the Park for the purpose of lectures; Mr Bradlaugh therefore lectured on Sunday * in the Free Institute, while he turned over in his mind a plan for the following Sunday (17th). He announced to his audience that he intended to lecture "very near the Park," but the precise spot would not be made known until it was too late for the police to interfere.

Bills were posted to the following effect:—

"In consequence of advice received, 'Iconoclast' will deliver an open-air address on Sunday forenoon, and will be present near the Devonport Park Lodge about half-past ten in order to vindicate the right of free speech."

Considerable excitement prevailed in Plymouth. Some thought that, in spite of the notice from the War Office representatives, the lecture was to be given in the Park itself; others thought a certain three-cornered field had been hired. All were wrong; private ground could not be had for love or money, the owners and renters of all such having joined the police and the clergy; vacant land belonging to the borough was also out of the question, because my father felt that to have lectured on such ground must have resulted in a collision with the police, and might have ended disastrously for some of his friends. Mr Bradlaugh, Mr Williamson, and Captain Trenaman consulted together, and—who originated the idea I do not know—after ascertaining that all the water was under the jurisdiction of the Saltash Corporation, it was resolved to give the lecture from a boat in such a way that while the audience were in the borough of Devonport, the speaker, only a few yards distant from his hearers, should be outside the Devonport jurisdiction.

* Meanwhile the Park was occupied by the military and the police in readiness to clear away the "infidels" should they appear.

"On Sunday morning, unfortunately, it rained in torrents and blew great gales," lamented Mr Bradlaugh, in a brief description of the day's adventures. "We, however, determined to persevere, and on arriving near the Devonport Park Lodge I soon found myself at the head of a considerable number, who, despite the rain and the wind, followed me to Stonehouse Creek, a small tributary of the river Tamar, where I embarked on board the boat previously hired, and on which we erected a sort of platform from which I delivered a short address, the union jack being hoisted at the head of the boat. Directly after I had commenced to speak, Mr Superintendent Edwards made his appearance, and certainly looked most disconsolate when he found the plan I had adopted to avoid his vigilance. As it was still raining very hard, I made my address a very brief one, telling the people that I was very glad of the opportunity of asserting the right of free speech, and promising to assert it again when I next visited Devonport. I was cheered several times notwithstanding the still descending torrent. Mr Edwards, who had nearly captured the cab containing my wife, had under his command no less than twenty-eight policemen besides Inspector Bryant, and the Mayor was prepared with the Riot Act; but all their precautions were set at naught, and the right of open-air propaganda was victoriously asserted. Mr Superintendent Edwards, with scarcely bottled up ire and indignation, endeavoured to find a victim in the licensed waterman, but even here he was defeated, as Captain Trenaman had taken his own crew."

Mr Bradlaugh concluded his account by thanking the friends who had helped him "and the bold Trenamans, father and son, who commanded under me my first marine endeavour at Freethought propaganda." Immediately after the conclusion of the police proceedings Mr Bradlaugh wrote a letter to Superintendent Edwards demanding that he should publish an apology in certain papers and pay £10 to the Devon and Cornwall Hospital, £10 to the Stoke Female Orphan Asylum, and his (Mr Bradlaugh's) witnesses' expenses; but the messenger who delivered the letter was informed by Edwards that he would take no notice of the communication, but would consign it to the wastepaper basket. In fact, all the written reply that Edwards did make was of the shortest and curtest; it consisted merely of these words: "I beg

to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this morning." After such a letter, my father put the matter into the hands of his solicitor, who laid it before counsel for advice, with the result that legal proceedings were commenced against Mr Edwards for assault and false imprisonment.

A little later at a meeting of the Devonport Town Council the Watch Committee reported that they had instructed the Town Clerk to take measures for Mr Edwards' defence, and asked the Council's approval of what they had done. After considerable discussion twenty-eight persons voted for the adoption of the report and two against. The names of those voting were formally taken down, and it is rather curious to find that at least four members of the Council who voted that the Town of Devonport should undertake the expense and conduct of the defence of the Police Superintendent, had sat upon the Bench and decided against him without troubling my father to go through the whole of his case. In their capacity as magistrates they were compelled by the evidence to find him wrong: as Town Councillors they allowed their prejudices full scope, and voted that the borough of Devonport should find money to support the Superintendent in his defence of what they themselves had agreed were wrongful acts.

The case against Mr Superintendent Edwards came on at the Devon Lammas Assizes at Exeter, before Mr Baron Channell, on Monday, July 29th. The reports * say that

"the Court was crowded, great interest being excited in the case. Many ladies were present, and nearly the whole of the briefless barristers on the circuit seemed roused from their ordinary drowsy dulness into something like life and activity. The case lasted from ten in the forenoon until nine in the evening, and was tried before a special jury."

Unfortunately, Mr Bradlaugh made one great and irreparable blunder. Instead of conducting the case himself, he allowed himself to be persuaded into briefing counsel, Mr Robert Collier, Q.C., M.P., and Mr Cole. The nature of this blunder, and its importance before a special jury in a cathedral city, may be realised by reading a few words of comment from a hostile leader on the case which appeared in the *Western Morning News* for July 31st.

---

* *National Reformer*, the *Western Morning News*, and *Western Daily Mercury*.

This journal, which was so unfriendly towards my father's cause as to aver that the devout Christian looked "to the State to keep the Queen's highway free from Atheist lecturers and infidel propagandists," nevertheless stated in the most distinct fashion that "the counsel for the plaintiff was far more anxious to assert his own orthodoxy than his client's rights." And with this opinion I think most people will agree who read the Counsel's speech for the defence; not, however, that I intend to give the whole of Mr Collier's speech, because it is at once too long, and it goes over ground with which we are already familiar; still, I will quote a few of his expressions to prove that I am not judging him too hardly. Almost in the opening words of his speech Mr Collier said: "I am informed that Mr Bradlaugh desired to deliver a lecture or a sermon—I hardly know which." This was pure prevarication, as the utmost pains had been taken to give Mr Collier the whole facts of the case. A little later he stated:—

"Mr Bradlaugh belonged to a Society called the 'Secular Society.' Now I have never heard of the Society until this, nor did I ever hear of 'Iconoclast' before. . . . . I really don't know what their [the Secularists'] tenets are, but I believe they are connected in some way with the Unitarians."

This assertion was so monstrous that it immediately brough forth a letter of repudiation from the Rev. Henry Knott, Unitarian Minister of Plymouth; although, to do this gentleman justice, he said he believed that the Secularists were themselves "much too honest to wish to identify themselves with a body of Christians who have frequently opposed them in fair and open controversy." Mr Collier then wrote a letter to the Rev. Henry Knott in reply, regretting that he had misrepresented the Unitarians, and saying further:—

"As to the 'Secularists,' I had never heard of them until I had received the brief in 'Bradlaugh *v.* Edwards.' I have since ascertained, however, that they are a considerable sect; so much so, that I wonder that I had not heard of them. *I was informed that a portion of them was connected with the Unitarians*, and therefore supposed that a portion of them acknowledged the Divine origin of Christianity; *if I was mis informed*, I am very sorry for it."

The italics are mine; and if Mr Collier meant to imply that he received this information from his client or his attorney—the only

persons from whom he should have received information bearing on the conduct of this case—he still further dishonoured himself, because the utmost candour was shown him in laying the facts before him, and most assuredly no such statement as that quoted could have been made to him by sane men who knew the facts.

But to return to Mr Collier's speech. I will give just two more quotations, and then leave it:—

"I should be extremely sorry," he said, "if I were understood, as the advocate of Mr Bradlaugh or anybody else, as for one moment defending any circulation, either by printing or by word of mouth, of anything libellous, seditious, or blasphemous. . . . . If Mr Bradlaugh had been permitted to preach, and if he had preached anything improper, blasphemous, or seditious, I should not have complained of the superintendent; on the contrary, I should praise him if he had taken the proper measures for bringing him before a court of justice."

"I will conclude," he further said, "with this remark, that I cannot help thinking that if the doctrines of this Secular Society, or any other Society, are preached, which you and I and all of us may think pernicious, by far the best thing is to let them alone. 'Truth is great and will prevail,' and we need not fear that the foundation of our religion will be shaken by a thousand Bradlaughs; and I cannot think of anything so pernicious and likely to prevent that very object we seek to accomplish, and to elevate persons such as these from obscurity into fame, as by making them unjustly martyrs. I cannot help thinking that the superintendent of the police, although acting from the very best motives, was acting with very great haste and indiscretion."

If Mr Collier had been briefed by the other side also, he could hardly have made a more equivocal speech; and it will be easily understood how much it was likely to prejudice both the judge and jury against a man whose opinions were so well known, and who had made no pretence of concealing them. The defence made every effort to avail themselves of the *odium theologicum* when it came to Mr Bradlaugh's turn to take his place in the witness-box. Mr Montagu Smith, Q.C., counsel for the defence, wished to cross-examine Mr Bradlaugh on some former lectures in which he expressed his disbelief in the Bible; Mr Collier objected; Mr Smith persisted; Baron Channell then allowed the question, taking note of Mr Collier's objection; Mr Smith again put his question, and my father replied: "I object to answer that question on the ground that if I answer it in the affirmative it will subject me to a criminal prosecution." Then came a little scene, which will strike

those who have been in the law courts with Mr Bradlaugh as by no means unfamiliar :—

"His Lordship then asked for the Act of Parliament, and

"The Plaintiff immediately replied : It is the 53rd William III. Archbold recites the statute.

"His Lordship and the learned counsel were then engaged in finding it ; and after having spent some time in vain, the plaintiff asked for a book, and on its being presented to him, he immediately found the statute in question, which he handed to his lordship. The learned judge then read it to the counsel, and said, this statute only applies to those educated in or making profession of Christianity. In answer to his question,

"The Plaintiff said : I was educated according to the Church of England.

"His Lordship : I allow the objection, witness claims exemption, and he is entitled to it."

Six times Mr Montagu Smith put similar questions to Mr Bradlaugh, and six times Mr Bradlaugh answered him in the same words. In his summing-up the judge, Mr Baron Channell, seemed determined not to be outdone by Mr Collier in evoking the religious prejudices of the jury. From Mr Smith, for the defence, such conduct was in some degree pardonable, even if not altogether in accordance with ordinary un-Christian notions of strict honour ; but in Mr Collier, counsel for the plaintiff, and Mr Baron Channell, presiding over what was supposed to be a Court of Justice, it was unpardonable. His Lordship regretted "that the constitution of the plaintiff's mind was such as to render him unable to believe in those great truths which afforded so much comfort and satisfaction to others ; the notion of going about and delivering lectures on those views he considered fraught with mischief and calculated to produce the greatest possible evil," while he further enlarged upon the "wickedness of disseminating such opinions."

After the summing-up of this just judge the jury gave a verdict for the plaintiff, with one farthing damages. The evidence was so strong, and some of the witnesses for the defence were so extravagant and unsatisfactory, that in spite of their prejudices the jury could not do other than decide in Mr Bradlaugh's favour ; but they did it as grudgingly as they could, and recorded their animus in the "damages" they awarded. On the following morning Mr

Baron Channell carried this a step further, and when Mr Collier made the formal application for the plaintiff's costs he refused to certify.

In spite of all the prejudice roused against him, Mr Bradlaugh met with considerable sympathy from the press, from foes* as well as friends.

* The *Western Times* (Exeter, August 3rd), *a hostile paper*, said: "The plaintiff certainly established his case, and the verdict was on the face of it ridiculous." "The religious feelings of the jury neutralized the spirit of the law by the ridiculous 'damages' which they awarded for his wrongs."

The *Morning Star* (August 2nd) had a most indignant article, condemning such a verdict "as a flagrant denial and mockery of justice." The *Bradford Review* was courageously outspoken, and urged that a new trial should be moved for.

In a leaderette the *Weekly Dispatch* (August 4th) thought that this Devonshire dealing was altogether a scene for Spain rather than for England, and condemned Mr Collier's conduct of the case. In the following issue *Publicola* had a long article on the proceedings, in which he deplored "that such an institution as that of trial by jury, to which we are indebted for magnificent assertions of political right and freedom, which, generally speaking, is a safeguard against social injury, should, by the conduct described, become a portion of the machinery of persecution."

Punch (August 10th) joined in its voice, and published a flippant article on "A Short Way with Secularists," in which it tells the story of the seizure of "that fellow Bradlaugh, who calls himself Iconoclast," and hailed with mock delight the advent of the "orthodox reaction." Said *Punch*, "The magistrates becoming judges of controversy, and the policemen forcing their decrees, the office of justice of the peace will become a holy office indeed, and the constabulary will rise into familiars of a British Inquisition."

Not the least remarkable article appeared in the Catholic *Tablet* for August 3rd. It speaks of the arrest and imprisonment of Mr Bradlaugh as "frightful persecution," and says: "His legal rights have been violated by the police, and a jury of British Protestants have refused him redress, because his interpretation of the Scriptures is different from theirs. Either that is religious persecution or there is no such thing."

In 1861 the English Roman Catholics regarded Mr Bradlaugh as a weak and (to them) harmless unit, and they affected to espouse his cause as a weapon against their deadly enemies, the Protestants. What a change in less than twenty years to the time when "Henry Edward, Cardinal-Archbishop," and Prince of the Church of Rome, thought it necessary, with his own powerful hand, to write protest after protest in the *Nineteenth Century*, against Mr Bradlaugh being allowed to take his seat in the Commons House at Westminster! What a change from 1861 to 1882, when this same great prelate thought it necessary to pay a formal visit in solemn state to the town of Northampton itself to use his mighty influence to turn the electors against "this poor Secular Iconoclast," as the *Tablet* once called him.

Mr Bradlaugh was not the man to remain content with such an unsatisfactory verdict, and accordingly he moved for a new trial. The motion was heard in the Court of Common Pleas, Westminster, on November 4th and 5th of the same year, before the Lord Chief Justice, Sir William Erle, and the Justices Williams, Byles, and Keating. Mr Bradlaugh asked for a new trial on the grounds of misdirection, improper rejection of evidence tendered by the plaintiff, improper reception of evidence tendered by the defendant; and that the verdict was a perverse one and against evidence. After reciting the course of the trial at Exeter, he pointed out that in that trial he "laboured under a double disadvantage, not only in having all the jury selected from the county [of Devon], where there was great feeling existing in the matter, but that they were selected from among men who had to pay the costs in the action,* and who would have to pay further damages and costs if in my favour, which a verdict of the jury would have given me."

After a lengthy discussion, in which all the judges took active part, the Lord Chief Justice said that they would consult "brother Channell" before they gave their answer.

Judgment was given the following day. The rule was refused, and the plaintiff insulted. Said Lord Chief Justice Erle—

"I know not in the least what are the opinions of the plaintiff that he was bent upon publishing; all that I am certain of is that there are opinions which are most pernicious. There are opinions which are in law a crime, and which every man ought—that is, every man of sound sense and generally esteemed of sound sense, would generally consider to be wrong. I do not know what these opinions are, but there are such opinions. If the plaintiff wanted to use his liberty for the purpose of disseminating opinions which were in reality of that pernicious description, and the defendant prevented him from doing that which might be a very pernicious act to those who heard him, and if the estimate I have mentioned be the true one, might be a matter he might afterwards deeply regret, it might be that the jury thought the act of imprisonment of the plaintiff under such circumstances was in reality not an injury for which a large money compensation ought to be paid, but on the contrary was an act which in its real substantial result was beneficial to the plaintiff, and so the nominal wrong would be abundantly compensated by the small sum given." †

* This refers to the decision of the Devonport Town Council.

† Shorthand report.

The other judges concurred with their leader, Mr Justice Keating making a yet further addition to the remarkable record of intolerant utterances in this case.

"I think," said he, "that questions should be put within a certain limit to the witness as to his opinion and belief, and that it is right the jury should have an opportunity of judging either from his answer or from his refusal to answer—should have an opportunity to form their own sentiment of the credibility to be attached to it [the evidence]."

This judgment, and even more the bigotry apparent throughout the judgment, was a great blow to Mr Bradlaugh, and he appealed against the decision. The appeal came on before the very same four judges on the following Friday (November 8). In spite of his most eloquent pleading—in which he was repeatedly interrupted by the Lord Chief Justice—the rule was refused; the Lord Chief Justice kept religiously (I use the word advisedly) to his already expressed opinion that a witness "is by implication discredited by his refusal to answer;" and that he could see no "intentional violation of right;" he further clinched the matter by saying that "in the present instance there is nothing which could induce me to interfere."

These proceedings did their work in helping to form public opinion in favour of free speech, but they cost my father several hundreds of pounds, and burdened him with a debt which took long to clear off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"KILL THE INFIDEL."

In the month of January, 1861, Mr Stephen Bendall was charged by Mr Nicholas Le Mesurier, a constable of St Peter Port, Guernsey, with having upon several occasions in the month before distributed printed papers calculated to bring the Christian religion into contempt and ridicule. The Court sentenced Mr Bendall to give bail in the sum of £20 not to distribute any such tracts during the space of twelve months, or in default to be imprisoned for a fortnight. That the sentence took so lenient a form was doubtless in some measure due to the enlightened remarks of one of the jurats, a Mr Tupper, who warned his colleagues that they should be "very careful not to countenance persecution on the ground of religion, for if we entered upon that course we could not tell where we should stop." Whether he did not feel himself altogether strong enough to oppose the prevailing temper of the bench, or from whatever reason, Mr Tupper did not propose an acquittal, but suggested the above bail, which the Court after some consultation accepted, with the alternative of a fortnight's imprisonment. The Queen's Procureur had asked that Mr Bendall should be imprisoned for a fortnight, "three days in each week solitary and on bread and water, and afterwards to give security in the sum of £50 not to distribute any of the tracts during the next twelve months, or quit the island."

This being the state of affairs in the island of Guernsey as to the freedom of opinion, and, moreover, as some of the tracts distributed appear to have been written by Mr Bradlaugh himself, it is not surprising to find the following notice amongst my father's lecture engagements in the next issue of the *National Reformer*:—

'February 26th, 27th, 28th—Guernsey. Specially to settle the question, Will the authorities put in force the laws against blasphemy?"

An advertisement was sent to the *Guernsey Mail*, but that paper

not only ostentatiously declined to insert it, but thought fit to make a public declaration of its own virtue. The subject of the proposed "Infidel lectures" was to be an endeavour to prove that the Bible is not a revelation from an all-perfect Deity; and this the editor of the *Guernsey Mail* chose to construe as the admission of the existence of a God; and upon this glaringly false premise he built quite a series of astonishingly childish arguments in proof of the wickedness of Mr Bradlaugh and Atheists generally. Then, apparently quite satisfied as to the effect of what he had written, he took it "for granted that, if the Assembly Rooms are really to be applied to Infidel purposes, no decent person, rich or poor, old or young, will give his countenance or notice their intention save to dissuade the unwary from lending an ear."

On the Sunday Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in Sheffield, but he left for London by the night train, and arrived at Guernsey on Tuesday morning about half-past eight. On the pier Mr Bendall was awaiting him with some anxiety.

"His anxiety," Mr Bradlaugh relates, "was partly occasioned by the knowledge that some preparations had been made to welcome me with a royal salute of rotten eggs. One Christian lady, I was credibly informed, had subscribed for the purpose of providing me with this savoury donation." In spite, however, of all rumours to the contrary, "the landing was effected without opposition, and I walked into Guernsey without even a word. Many eyes were directed towards me, and greater curiosity could scarcely have been evinced had I been a red-buttoned mandarin or a tritailed Pasha." *

My father had already thrown down the gauntlet by the circulation of a handbill addressed to the Procureur, to the clergy (especially of the Methodist New Connection, who had been particularly prominent in the proceedings against Mr Bendall), and to the Guernsey public. In this handbill he stated his intention to lecture on the Bible in the Assembly Rooms, which had been engaged for the 27th and 28th for that purpose, and invited free and fair discussion upon his lecture. To this declaration of defiance he signed his name and gave his address in full. Mr Bradlaugh's first visit was to the Assembly Rooms, for the proprietors had yielded to the virtuous displeasure of the *Guernsey*

* *National Reformer*, March 9, 1861.

Mail and the bigoted section of the community, and had withdrawn from their contract without giving any reason. On Mr Bradlaugh's application he was informed that the proprietors did not intend to give any reason. No printer would print bills, and no crier would make announcement of the tabooed lectures. These were small difficulties, however, for which my father was not altogether unprepared, and he had therefore with him bills already printed; he had the bills, it is true, but now came another difficulty—no bill poster would post them! "Under these circumstances," he tells us, "Mr Bendall and myself sallied forth, armed with a pastepot, brush, and ladder, and by the aid of the moon succeeded in affixing our notices to the wall in a manner which would have done credit to a professional bill-poster." He then addressed letters to the prosecutors in Mr Bendall's case; these included a Methodist minister, a local preacher, a missionary, and the Harbour Master, Captain Le Mesurier. He also sent letters to the Bailiff and the ten jurats of the island; and to these last he further sent three of his pamphlets.

What happened on the following days I am fortunately able to tell in Mr Bradlaugh's own words, for he gave a vivid description of his adventures in the *National Reformer*. He wrote: "During the Wednesday the excitement increased. On the walls some one had chalked 'Down with the Infidles,' 'Away with the Infidles;' perhaps the writer thought that I was a species of musical instrument, or it may be a Guernsey fashion to spell infidel differently from ourselves. Two immense boards, on which we had affixed a prominent notice of the meeting, were carried off from the doors of the Hotel de l'Europe, and recaptured with some difficulty. Near the hour of the lecture the whole of the street was crowded with people, but the room was only about half full, the multitude being apparently afraid to enter. . . . Directly I began to speak the room filled, and was soon crowded to excess, as were the bottom of the stairs and the passage. Many had to retire unable to gain admittance. At the same time that I commenced my lecture a terrific uproar was initiated in the streets; yells, hootings, groanings were raised which would do credit even to ignorant Wigan Orangemen, and at last a battering was commenced against the window shutters; so terrible was the din that, after speaking for twenty minutes, I determined to endeavour to put an end to it, and asked the persons present to kindly keep their places in the

room while I quelled the riot outside. Many entreated me not to go, assuring me that my personal safety would be endangered; but I thought it best to go, and I went out alone, and found to my disgust that a huge mob, many of whom were respectably dressed, were encouraging some lads to break in the shutters with stones. I walked deliberately forward, and the lads ran away from their work. One stone was thrown which passed near my forehead, and the whole mass of men, women, and children set up a tremendous cry, part groan, part shriek, part yell, which must have lasted at least three minutes without the slightest lull. Half deafened by the clamour, I respectfully bowed, and mentally calculated the effect of sea air in strengthening the lungs of these cowards, who actually fell back step by step as I walked alone towards them." Desisting at length from what seemed a futile attempt to quiet the noisy multitude, Mr Bradlaugh returned to the lecture room and resumed his discourse. His attempt at securing peace without was not so wasted as it had at first seemed, for the noise grew less and less, until it ceased altogether. He lectured for an hour and a half, and then publicly distributed a hundred of the condemned tracts, challenging the island authorities to proceed against him. On going out he found the mob very threatening; they "followed me to my lodgings," he said, "hooting and yelling, and shouting 'Kill the Infidel!' 'Murder the Infidel!'"

By the next day the excitement had greatly increased; it was said that the quay porters had been incited to violence, and certainly several of them were found collected outside the Hotel de l'Europe well plied with drink. The narrow street in which the Hotel was situated was crowded by an infuriated mass of persons, and Mr Bradlaugh had great difficulty in making his way to the lecture room. His audience was large, and composed of respectable persons, who listened quietly and attentively to his discourse. They were, however, only allowed to remain in peace for about twenty minutes, for at the end of that time the outside mob "became ungovernable, and dashing in the plate glass doors, broke into the house, and for a few moments stopped the proceedings. "Several of those, who had been made drunk for the occasion," continued my father, "I had great difficulty in expelling from the room; and this difficulty was increased by the addition of half-a-dozen soldiers who, strange to say, had been provided with passes to enable them to take part in the disturbance. Notwith-

standing, I persevered in my lecture for about half-an-hour longer, although the exertion required on my part to control the riotous assemblage was of no ordinary character. The bulk of the respectable persons seemed highly indignant at the treatment to which I was subjected, and begged me not to risk my life amongst the excited multitude outside. An attempt was now made to turn out the gas, and considerable damage was done to the chairs and forms. I determined despite all to brave the riot, although shouts of 'Kill the Infidel,' 'Pitch the Infidel into the sea,' were heard on every side. My size aided me; the mob were as cowardly as they were noisy; and none liked to be the first in the projected assault. The soldiery now seemed inclined to co-operate in the endeavour to offer violence, and the consequence might have been serious to all concerned had it not been for the shrewdness of Madame Laval, the proprietress of the hotel, who, finding it useless to oppose my determination to face the mob, coolly pretended to show me a better way out of the hotel, and ushered me into a dark room, and locked me up for a couple of hours until the excitement had subsided. On Friday morning I quitted the island by the boat for Southampton; the pier was crowded, and on my appearance a few began to hiss, but ceased the moment I walked towards them. When the boat began to start, the cowardly fellows (knowing that I could not then return), headed by and instigated thereto by Captain Le Mesurier, the Harbour Master, an old gentleman whose appearance should have bespoken better conduct, hissed and yelled with a persistence which would have done credit to a nobler cause."

The local press endorsed the conduct of the "indignant population" in their treatment of Mr Bradlaugh by calling it "an act of natural justice," but the local authorities made no attempt at prosecution. In consequence of the damage done to the hall, the expenses were considerable, and receipts there were none; but as Mr Bradlaugh wrote later on, this was only one of thirty-two lectures given in the first six months of the year 1861 in which he incurred loss in "extending Freethought propaganda into new districts."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROVINCIAL ADVENTURES, 1860-1863.

In addition to the more serious opposition which Mr Bradlaugh encountered at such places as Wigan, Devonport, and Guernsey, there were countless smaller "incidents" constantly occurring, some unpleasant, others merely ludicrous. I have noted a few for these pages; of these, perhaps, the greater number may be thought of minor importance, but at least they will serve to show the kind of reception given to heretical opinions in the provinces five-and-thirty years ago.

At Altrincham, one Sunday, early in June 1860, my father had engaged to deliver two open-air addresses. Several highly religious persons openly indulged in the fond wish that it might rain hard on Hale Moss; and as if in direct response to their prayers, "the lightning flashed, thunder pealed, and the rain poured down in torrents." The lightning struck a public-house chimney and did considerable damage generally. The clergyman of St Margaret's, Altrincham, foolishly hoped that this would prove a warning to people to keep away from Infidel lectures. Mr Bradlaugh's comment on this was, that it was "a curious warning to strike a public-house with electricity to frighten people from hearing the address of a teetotal Infidel." In any case, the "warning" was not a very thoroughgoing one, for the storm cleared, and in the evening there was a large and attentive audience. A few months later, Mr Bradlaugh was again lecturing in Altrincham, and without the help of a single placard 1000 persons attended in the afternoon, and rather more in the evening. At the end of the evening lecture a police sergeant came forward and announced to my father that he was obstructing a thoroughfare, and must therefore "move on." "Legally he may be right," said Mr Bradlaugh afterwards, "but if it is a thoroughfare, grass grows upon it; it is almost impassable for horse and cart, and is a direct route to nowhere. My lecture, however, being over,

I bowed to the majesty of the law, as represented by Z 1, and only hope that the police will always wait, in like manner, till the conclusion of the proceedings before saying 'move on.'"

In August "Iconoclast" had arranged to visit the village of Shaw. The prospect created great excitement in the district, which was further worked up by the *Oldham Standard* inserting letters of attack but refusing reply; there was even a rumour that force would be used to prevent the lectures. No room could be obtained, and so the address had to be delivered in the open air. Mr Bradlaugh had scarcely commenced to speak when a Royton Police Sergeant called roughly to him to come down :—

ICONOCLAST: "Why?"

SERGEANT: "Never you mind why! Come down, or I will pull you down."

ICONOCLAST: "You may try if you like, and one of us may come down, but I do not think I shall be that one."

The police sergeant was sadly bothered; he tried again; but Iconoclast quoted legal authorities.

The poor policeman then consulted with those about him, and finding bullying of no avail, at length retired, leaving Iconoclast and his audience in possession of the field. It can hardly be called "undisturbed" possession however, for the Christians, having been unsuccessful in the matter of police interference, hired a drum and other noise-creating instruments, and posted them on some adjacent private ground; but even in this way they failed to break up the meeting, as they counted without Mr Bradlaugh's powerful voice and tenacity of purpose. He persisted to the end, and delivered his lecture to a most orderly audience of some 800 persons. He visited Shaw several times during the next twelve months; but although he was still unable to get a room to speak in, the manners of his Christian opponents improved on each occasion.

When Mr Bradlaugh was unknown, he often had difficulty in finding a chairman to preside at his meetings. Sometimes he would proceed without one, and sometimes one would be elected by the audience. A chairman so elected, however, would occasionally have comical ideas as to the duties of his position, and regard the chair merely as a privileged place, from which he might make hostile comments upon the methods and manner of the lecturer. In such a case the harmony of the meeting was better preserved without the assistance of a chairman.

But if it was difficult to get a chairman to preside over the meeting, it was even more difficult in many places to get a hall in which the meeting could be held. At Sunderland the hall was refused to Mr Bradlaugh because it could not be let for "such damnable doctrines." In Rochdale the Public Hall, although let for week-day lectures, was refused for Sunday discourses. The Rochdale Freethinkers therefore hired the theatre; but the police authorities, whose functions seemed to include "the cure of souls," intimated to the lessee that if he kept to his contract his licence would be in danger. When this was explained to Mr Bradlaugh, he gave way, and delivered his lectures in the open air; in the morning on the Butts to about 3000 persons, in the evening in a large field near Roebuck to a still larger audience. The only result, therefore, of this endeavour to shut him out of Rochdale on the Sunday, was really to procure for him larger and more interested audiences. In January 1861, Mr Bradlaugh went to Leigh, in Lancashire, where no Freethought speaker had been for twenty years. The thermometer was below freezing, and the roads like ice. A menagerie, with real wild beasts who roared and a real elephant who walked the streets, occupied the thoughts of the town. But worse than new place, icy weather, or wonderful menagerie, was the bellman of Leigh. This bellman, wrote my father sorrowfully, was not "a teetotaller, and had offered up considerable sacrifices to Bacchus. This course of conduct sadly interfered with the clearness of his articulation, and to fill the cup of my misery he had also to announce the loss of a donkey. The two announcements were so jumbled together that little was distinguishable except the donkey." *

From Leigh Mr Bradlaugh went in the freezing weather to Warrington, another place in which no Freethought speaker had raised his voice for a score or more of years, but where the editor of the *Warrington Guardian* had been trying to fan some warmth of hate into the townsfolk. In the issue for January 5th, the editor announced that there was to be "a most ribald, ignorant, and virulent attack upon the Holy Scriptures," adding further that Mr Bradlaugh had been lecturing in the neighbourhood

"in such a blasphemous manner that the local papers have been utterly unable to report his sayings. Surely Warrington has enough of

* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, Jan. 12, 1861.

temptations to ungodliness without any assistance from stipendiary peripatetics, or pickers up of a lazy living, who cover with their slime, like noxious reptiles, what they want sense or taste to admire."

It was by such attack upon an as yet unheard man that this Christian thought to serve the Omnipotent. From insulting Mr Bradlaugh he went on to abuse the lessee of the Warrington theatre, who had let the theatre for the lecture, and here his attack proved successful; for in consequence of the pressure put upon him, the "unfortunate lessee," as my father magnanimously called him, felt compelled to close the theatre. The *Guardian* triumphantly announced that the lectures would not be held, but this was somewhat premature. Mr Bradlaugh succeeded in getting a small room in a back street, and fresh placards were issued, although it was so late as the night before the lecture. After delivering two lectures to small but attentive audiences, he left Warrington between two and three a.m. for Dumfries, with the thermometer standing at eighteen degrees. There he remained three days, lecturing each evening, and had fair audiences and a pleasant time, notwithstanding that this was the first time within the memory of the "oldest inhabitant" that a Freethought speaker had been to Dumfries.*

When his adversaries could find nothing better to say, they would taunt him with earning money by his lectures, and this sneer was repeated in every variety of elegant language.†

No sort of insult was too gross for such people to condescend to for "the honour of our God." In November 1860,

---

* Mr Barker's lecture (p. 121) was a month or two later.

† A correspondent to the *Oldham Standard* enjoined upon his fellow Christians that it was their duty "to root out of our establishments every one advocating his principles, for the safety of those committed to our care, and the honour of our God. Let us do this and 'Iconoclast,' will fall to the ground and never again rise. His object is to live upon the pence of his deluded hearers, and, after a time, when he has become old and infirm, to turn round, and by a recantation of his present teaching worm himself into comfortable bread as a reclaimed infidel."

The *North Cheshire Herald*, in alluding to some lectures delivered by Mr Bradlaugh at Hyde, in the summer of 1861, said:—

"In justice to 'Iconoclast,' we must say he possesses great oratorical powers, and he has, so far as the ignorant are concerned, a very pleasing way of practising on their gullibility. He is cunning to a degree, but his object may be seen through without the aid of spectacles. It is evident that

Mr Bradlaugh remarked* that "some one who signs himself 'Z' in the *Glossop Record*, but who is not a wise head, says I have come 'to raise the wind.' He is right. It will probably blow a severe gale in the Gospel vineyard in Glossop before we have done with it."

In the spring of 1861, Mr Bradlaugh spent two days at Burnley. As here again no hall could be obtained, his lectures had to be delivered in the open air, with the usual result, that instead of having an audience of a few hundred persons, thousands came to listen to his voice.

About the same time, the Market Hall at Chesterfield was hired for lectures, and afterwards closed against Mr Bradlaugh. The theatre was then taken, but even here Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to make his entrance by force. The audiences were, as usual, orderly and attentive, "notwithstanding the fact that at one lecture the authorities suddenly, and without any previous intimation, cut off the gas from the main and plunged the theatre into total darkness." † The editor of the *Derbyshire Times*, in referring to these lectures, exhibited some confusion of ideas; he thought too much fuss had already been made "in the matter of that blustering bigot 'Iconoclast,'" and then proceeded to devote considerable space to him; he thought the Mayor of Chesterfield was wrong in shutting him out of the theatre, but considered he himself was wise in "excluding an Infidel controversy" from the paper. "In my heart," he said, "I pity Iconoclast. One serious illness would make him a coward." This is a favourite piece of clap-trap with a certain class of Christians. It may deceive other Christians—and it is possibly said with that intent—for an Atheist it has no meaning. As for this, it is sufficient to say that more than once, more than twice, my father consciously found himself face to face with death, and on each occasion his mind was perfectly clear and his brain wonderfully acute. He was full of regrets and full of anxiety; but his regrets

---

he means money; for when it is known that he received £5 for using such blasphemous language as would not be uttered by the very lowest of the 'fallen' class, the fact is indisputable. . . . . We sincerely hope that God will change his heart, and that when he is about quitting this sublunary world, he will not be heard exclaiming, as other infidels have done, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"

* In *National Reformer* of that date. † In *National Reformer*, June 1861.

were for his unfinished work; his anxieties were for those he loved no less than for those who loved him, or were dependent upon him. For himself, speaking of the near possibility of death with his doctors, he said, "Ah, well, I cannot grumble; I have lived the lives of three men; I have burned the candle at both ends, and the middle as well." He suffered great physical pain, but he never broke down, and not for a single instant did his courage waver.

At Worksop, at this period, not only could no lecture room be obtained, but the prejudice in the town was so great that no one had sufficient courage to go with Mr Bradlaugh to the place of meeting. It rained all day until close upon the lecture hour, and then he turned out rather disconsolately to find the appointed place. Under a lamp he found a bill announcing that that was the spot from which he was expected to speak, and by the bill there was the welcome sight of a Sheffield friend. To this audience of one he commenced his address, but after a few minutes—despite the counter-attractions heralded by the drums of a travelling showman—the audience grew in size and in attentive interest. At the close some questions were put, and there was some intelligent conversation upon the subject of the lecture. One Christian, however, who was, for some reason, told that his question would be answered upon the following evening, cried, "Answer it to-night; to-morrow you may be where you ought to be, in hell."

In August 1861 Mr Bradlaugh was in Lancashire, and on one showery Sunday he betook himself to a place known as Boardman's Edge, where it was arranged that he should lecture. He himself tells the story of this experience.

"On arriving at the place," he says, "I found a little opposition: three policemen and a stout gentleman in black, whose precise status I was unable to ascertain, but who was introduced to me as the 'Lord's Steward,' forbade the meeting. Their prohibition had little effect, and the meeting soon assembled in the field hired for the purpose, and numbered from 1500 to 2000 persons. . . . The [Royton] band prefaced the meeting with a march, and then Mr J. Biltcliffe, of Stalybridge, was elected chairman. Another attempt was now made; the constabulary had been reinforced, five were now present, and they came with the farmer from whom the field had been taken, to eject us *vi et armis*. The police began

to talk, but as their oratory is not very inspiring I ordered them to keep quiet until the farmer had spoken.

"FARMER: You must go away from here.

"ICONOCLAST: The field is mine. I decline to go.

"FARMER: It is true I have let you the field, but I find you must not have it.

"ICONOCLAST: As you have let the field, I am your tenant, and occupy it as such. I am sorry to give you trouble, but I decline to go.

"POLICE-OFFICER: Oh, we'll see about that.

"ICONOCLAST: Silence, sir; you and your companions, as policemen, have no right here on my ground, except by my permission. If you are disorderly, I shall have you removed." The police were suddenly subdued; from talkers they became listeners, and the meeting proceeded peacefully and satisfactorily.

An advertisement, stating that my father proposed to lecture in the Dewsbury Public Hall on February 9th, 1862, provoked an extraordinary burst of venom and spite from those who constituted themselves chief defenders of the faith in Dewsbury. The following is the text of a bill posted throughout the town, and is probably unrivalled as a form of attack:—

"Grand discovery! To be seen to-morrow, Sunday, not one hundred miles from the Public Hall, a fine specimen of the gorilla tribe, standing seven feet six inches in height, imported into England from Sheffield, the capital of the Hollyhock settlement, in the interior of Africa, and brought to this town for public exhibition by Mr Greenfield. This gorilla is said to be one of the finest of its tribe. It presents a bold front, is impudent in its demeanour, and growls fearfully at the approach of a debt-collector, magistrate, or any Government officer. Having been some time in England under an assumed name, it has acquired a smattering of the language, and will address visitors on the origin, progress, and future prospects of the gorilla tribe. As the animal will be properly secured, parties need be in no apprehension of danger."

Of course, the only effect of this ridiculous insult was to increase the size of the audience, people coming from Huddersfield, Leeds, and other places round.

A curious incident happened at Leeds, where Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in August 1862. The subject for the evening address was, "Were Adam and Eve our first parents?" and Mr Bradlaugh was opposed by a young man who had already offered some oppo-

sition at the afternoon lecture, and had then created a favourable impression by the pleasant ease and fluency with which he spoke. A question arose as to a passage in the works of Eusebius to which Mr Bradlaugh had referred. The passage, which he read at request, the young man, who turned out to be a paid preacher belonging to Kirkstall, near Leeds, said was not from Eusebius, but from some other book. On Mr Bradlaugh asking for the name of the book, the young preacher said he had so many books that he could not remember their names, but if Mr Bradlaugh would go home with him at the conclusion of the lecture he would show him the book. This audacious young man must have been somewhat dismayed when he found himself taken seriously, for after the lecture Mr Bradlaugh hired a cab and went home with him "accompanied by one Christian and one Infidel to see fair play." Arrived at Kirkstall, the preacher's "numerous library subsided into two modest rows of books on a little table, and after about half an hour's search [he] ended by begging my pardon, and admitting that *he had made a mistake.*" * The Christian who had gone "to see fair play" was so ashamed that he called upon Mr Bradlaugh on the following evening and reimbursed the cab-hire which the latter had paid. But the "mendacious parsonling" (as my father called him) knew no shame, for at Mr Bradlaugh's next lecture he again rose and tried to explain away his former conduct and misstatement; he further said that he had consulted with persons well read in Eusebius, but none had met with the passage quoted by Mr Bradlaugh, and to satisfy the audience he had procured the volume of Eusebius and brought it with him. "I rather too hastily abbreviated his triumph," said Mr Bradlaugh, "by turning to the book he brought . . . and by reading from his own volume the paragraph which he had so decidedly said was not there." The young Christian teacher did not seem to mind in the least being a second time exposed, for, quite unabashed, he rose again to speak on another subject.

There is one more story which I must tell before quite leaving the subject of these early provincial lecturing experiences, and I must tell it not merely because it presents what my father called "a rather novel feature," but because with a little addendum specially composed for the purpose it has been made to do duty as a sort of bulwark of the Christian faith.

---

* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*.

On the second Sunday of December, in the year 1863, Mr Bradlaugh was giving three lectures in the Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield, and the subject for the evening was "Le Roi Voltaire." A "very voluble lady," said to be an enthusiast of the Weaver school, got up after the lecture to offer some opposition—if what she said could be dignified by that name! This lady told the audience what we may suppose to have been intended as an awe-inspiring story, but which must, in reality, have been provocative of much mirth. Her son, she said, had once purchased half a pound of butter, and brought it home wrapped up in a leaf of some work by Voltaire. "The leaf was thrown upon the fire ere fully read, but the effect was so remarkable," said my father, in recounting this incident at the time, "that the son dreamed he saw Voltaire, who appeared with a ball of fire for a head and another ball of fire for a heart. Voltaire, while thus blazing, informed the lady's son that he, the French infidel, was burning in hell, where all Voltairians were sure to join him and share his fate."

This story, albeit rather trifling, is harmless enough, and even amusing as it stands, but the unauthorised revised version concludes by saying that Mr Bradlaugh was quite discomfited by the old lady's tale, and went away unable to answer her. I have seen this used against my father even since his death. Such are the devices resorted to by the foolish to convince people of the truths of Christianity.

CHAPTER XX.

A FREEMASON.

As Mr Bradlaugh was very much tied to London after 1862 on account of his business first in a solicitor's office, and then in the city, he was unable for a few years to lecture so frequently in the country. Saturdays and Sundays were almost his only opportunities for provincial speaking, but these he utilised to the fullest extent that the claims of his London friends would permit. Quite a large proportion of his lectures were given for the pecuniary benefit of some person or cause in need of help. Very often, too, during this period his health gave way. City work for his livelihood, writing, lecturing, and debating for his opinions' sake, rushes to France, Italy, or Germany, and night travelling before the days when long railway journeys were made easy—were a heavy tax on even his strength. And in addition to this, which I might call the general routine of his life, he had the occasional duty of defending his rights in the Law Courts against both Government and private individuals, and the anxiety of a Parliamentary candidature.

Amongst those lectures given away was one in August 1862 on "Freemasonry," under the auspices of the Reformed Rite of Memphis, for the benefit of the family of a deceased brother Mason. In November of the same year he, as Orator of the Grand Lodge *des Philadelphes*, waited upon the Lord Mayor with two others as a deputation from their Lodge to present £14 5s. to the fund of the distressed operatives in Lancashire. Of this sum £9 was a donation made in the name of Garibaldi, and the further £5 5s. by the Lodge of which Garibaldi was a member, as they proudly put it. I have made a special note of these early appearances of Mr Bradlaugh in his Masonic capacity, because his having been a Freemason has often been called in question, although I have before me some documents which ought to convince even the most incredulous. The first informs "all whom it may concern . . . that our Brother

Charles Bradlaugh, born in Hackney (England), who has signed his name in the margin hereof, was regularly received into Freemasonry and admitted to the third degree in the Grand Lodge of the Philadelphs." This certificate is dated from London the 9th of March 1859, and is very much stamped and signed with eleven signatures (exclusive of Mr Bradlaugh's), with a seal attached to it by a blue ribbon. His sponsor for this initiation was his dear and venerated friend Simon Bernard.* The second document in my possession, also signed with a dozen or more signatures, is a "*diplôme de Maître*" (diploma of Master) granted by the Grand Orient of France upon the demand of the "R.·. L.·. La Persévérante Amitié or .·. de Paris." This diploma is dated the 15th May 1862. The third is a much later document, and is to the following effect:—

"Sur la demande presentée par la R. L. Union et Persévérance o.·. Paris l'effet d'obtenir un diplôme de Maître pour le F. Charles Bradlaugh né à Londres le 26 7bre, 1833, demeurant à Londres membre reçu d'honneur. Le Grand Orient a delivré au F. Charles Bradlaugh le présent diplôme de Maître.

"Donné a l'O .·. de Paris le 4 Novembre 1884 (E. V.)"

It is signed by M. Cousin, Président du Conseil de l'Ordre, the Secretary, officers of the R. L. Union et Persévérance, and others.

Mr Bradlaugh belonged also to an English lodge affiliated to the Grand Lodge of England. He was received at Tottenham at the special request of the Lodge in the early part of the sixties, I believe, but I possess none of the usual certificates: these he returned to

* Towards the end of November 1862 death claimed him who had been to my father "friend, tutor, brother." When the exile was buried, Mr Bradlaugh wrote that "the proscribed of all the Nationalities of Europe mustered round his coffin to do him honour. Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland, Hungary, and France were numerously represented; and long ranks of the best and bravest of banished men trod in sadness in the rear of the funeral hearse." By the open grave at Kilburn, "amongst the hundreds of intellectual looking men here might be seen most noticeable the bearded figure of that most omniscient of political writers, Alexander Herzen; here the stalwart frame of the escaped Bakunin; here the saddened features of an old Englishman [Thomas Allsop] who had borne part with him in his political struggles, and who had loved the dead man with the fullest friendliness of his most honest nature." At the grave side spoke M. Talandier; my father spoke, also Mr G. J. Holyoake, M. Gustave Jourdain, and then M. Felix Pyat, whose fiery sentences were followed by the dull and mournful echo of the earth falling upon the coffin lid.

his Lodge when the Prince of Wales was made Past Grand Master. When it was announced that the lodges of England were about to honour the Prince of Wales "with a dignity he had done nothing to earn," Mr Bradlaugh addressed to him "a letter from a French, Italian, and English Freemason." This letter was published in the *National Reformer*, and afterwards reissued in pamphlet form. It was read by his Mother Lodge, *La Loge des Philadelphes*, and gave such unqualified satisfaction that an address of approval was sent him from the Lodge. The pamphlet had a very extensive circulation, and went through several editions.

In March 1874 my father made a fine speech at the annual banquet at the *Loge des Philadelphes*. It fell to him to speak to the toast, the "loyal" toast of the Lodge, "To the Oppressed of all Nations." The oppressed of Italy, of Spain, of France, of England, of Germany, were each separately remembered, and then he carried the toast on "To the oppressed of all nations: to the women everywhere; to the mothers, who with freer brains would nurse less credulous sons; to the wives, who with fuller thoughts would be higher companions through life's journeyings; to the sisters and daughters, who with greater right might work out higher duty, and with fuller training do more useful work; to woman, our teacher as well as nurse; our guide as well as child-bearer; our counsellor as well as drudge. To the oppressed of all nations: to those who are oppressed the most in that they know it least; to the ignorant and contented under wrong, who make oppression possible by the passiveness, the inertness of their endurance. To the memories of the oppressed in the past, whose graves—if faggot and lime have left a body to bury—are without mark save on the monuments of memory, more enduring than marble, erected in such temples by truer toast-givers than myself. To these we drink, sadly and gratefully; to the oppressed of the present—to those that struggle that they may win; to those that yet are still, that they may struggle; to the future, that in it there may be no need to drink this toast."

At this time when English Freemasons chose to cast doubts upon the reality of Mr Bradlaugh's membership, Freemasons on the other side of the Atlantic welcomed him to their Lodges.

While visiting Boston, Mr Bradlaugh was by special invitation of the Columbian and Adelphi Lodges present at their Masonic festivals. The last occasion should almost be looked upon as

historic, as far as the annals of Freemasonry are concerned, since it was a special festival in honour of the installation of Joshua B. Smith as Junior Warden of the Adelphi Lodge, South Boston, the first coloured Freemason elected to hold office in any regular Lodge. Eight years before * the St Andrew's Lodge had made Mr Smith and six other coloured men Freemasons, with the idea that they should establish a coloured men's Lodge, but the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts would not issue the warrant. In the interval Joshua B. Smith, already a Justice of the Peace, was elected to the Senate, and joined the Adelphi Lodge, which now took this opportunity of showing him honour.

Mr Bradlaugh himself always liked to remember that he was a "Free and accepted mason," and the outward and visible sign of that is to be found in the fact that he almost invariably selected the Masonic Boys' School as the charity to be benefited by any money paid as damages for libelling his personal character.

* This was in December 1874.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEBATES 1862–1866.

In September 1862 Mr Bradlaugh held a six nights' discussion with the Rev. W. Barker, a gentleman who had been lecturing against Atheism to a Christian Society in Clerkenwell. The debate was held in the Cowper Street School Rooms, City Road. The report I have by me was published by Ward & Co., and was taken from the notes of a shorthand writer, and approved by both disputants. The first two evenings were controlled by a chairman for each speaker, with Mr James Harvey for umpire; but Mr Harvey's impartial judgments gave so much satisfaction that the last four meetings were left entirely under his charge. The attendance—on some nights so great that people were turned away—averaged twelve hundred persons, and it was estimated that a thousand heard the whole of the debate. Some enthusiastic people journeyed long distances, such as from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Devonshire, and Norfolk, to be present. After all expenses were defrayed the surplus of £20 was sent to the Lord Mayor for the Lancashire Relief Fund. The subjects under discussion were:—

"I. Are the representations of Deity in the Bible irrational and derogatory?

"II. Is Secularism, which inculcates the practical sufficiency of morality, independent of Biblical religion, calculated to lead to the highest development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man?

"III. Is the doctrine of Original Sin, as taught in the Bible, theoretically unjust and practically pernicious?

"IV. Does Secularism, which admits the authority of nature alone, and which appeals to reason as the best means of arriving at truth, offer a surer basis for human conduct than Christianity, which rests its claims on a presumed Divine revelation?

"V. Is the plan of Salvation through the Atonement repulsive in its

details, immoral in its tendency, and unworthy of the acceptance of the human race?

"VI. Is the doctrine of personal existence after death, and of eternal happiness or misery for mankind, fraught with error and injurious to humanity?"

My father, writing during the progress of this debate, described Mr Barker as a speaker not calculated, so far as he had yet seen, to excite his audience. "He is," said he, "a robust, happy-looking man, slightly inclined to go to sleep during his speeches, and hardly lively enough in his sallies. He appears to wish to strike occasionally, but fears the result of his own blow. Perhaps as the debate proceeds he will be more vigorous in his replies, and more piquant in his affirmations."

Mr John Watts spoke of the reverend gentleman in much the same terms,* paying special tribute to Mr Barker's evident desire to fairly represent his opponent's views.

The report of this debate, carried on for six nights, and dealing with six separate questions in eighteen speeches a side, makes quite a formidable volume of more than two hundred pages. It has in it much that is interesting and much that is dull, a little that is witty, and more that is weak. It would weary the reader, and serve no useful purpose, were I to attempt a representation of the arguments used. I will only note that on the sixth and last evening Mr Bradlaugh opened with an impeachment of the morality of the doctrine of a future existence in happiness or in torment, the bribe and the penalty of the Christian religion; and in his final speech, after briefly reviewing the whole debate, he stated

* Contrast the delicate words of personal description written by a Christian in the *Clerkenwell News*: "The manner and appearance of the minister and the Atheist were as much at variance as the Gospel of the one is with the 'reasoning' of the other. The one with a kind, affectionate air—a calm self-reliance, resulting from faith in a beneficent God and loving Redeemer—was a fit defender of love and mercy. On the other hand, the Atheist's looks stamped him as a low demagogue. He was throughout restless; now displaying his ring, after admiring it himself; now turning with an idiotic grin towards his followers, who certainly resembled Falstaff's recruits in appearance; and throughout conducting himself as a boastful, ill-bred man. His personal appearance did not aid him, for it partook of that animal which is said much to resemble some men. His voice, like the whine of a dog, was rendered more unpleasant by a spluttering lisp, occasioned by his inability to bring his lower jaw forward enough to meet his protruding upper lip."

his position. Mr Barker, he tells his listening audience, "comes as an exponent of God's will to man. I come as a student of rising thought, of the endeavour to know—as a student of the great problem of life. I have no revelation; I have no bitter excommunications—no anathemas to hurl upon you; but I have this to say: the wide book of humanity lies open before you. Turn its pages over. I can offer you no inducements to come here. I admit that to be a Freethinker is to be an outlaw, according to the laws of England. I admit that to profess your disbelief renders you liable at the present moment to fine and imprisonment and penal servitude. I admit that that is the statute law of England. I admit that if you are free enough to say you are an infidel, your evidence may in a court of justice be rejected, and that so you may be robbed.* I admit we have not wealth and power on our side—power which the Christian Church, through eighteen centuries of extortion, has managed to get together. But I tell you what we have. We have the pleasant consciousness that we make the public conscience and public opinion step by step with each thought we give out and each good deed we do. Our church is not a narrow church, nor narrow chapel, nor Bible sect, but the wide church of humanity, covered by no steeple, with texts preached from no pulpit, but with each man as his own priest, working out his own salvation, and that of his fellows too—not on his knees, but on his feet, with clenched hand and nervous brain, fighting wrong and asserting right, and striving to make humanity freer."

On Monday and Wednesday, the 1st and 3rd of February 1864, Mr Bradlaugh met Thomas Cooper, the sometime Freethinker, author of the "Purgatory of Suicides," and now "Lecturer on Christianity," in debate. This debate had been talked of for nearly eight years, but although Mr Bradlaugh was eager for the fray Mr Cooper was more reluctant; he affected to despise his junior for his lack of learning, and several times publicly derided his "ignorance"; he himself was reputed a scholar, and boasted a knowledge of fourteen languages. As it was, Mr Cooper himself worded the subjects to be discussed, and refused to meet my father under his *nom de guerre* of "Iconoclast." On the first evening Mr

* This was in 1862, before the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and Mr Bradlaugh's Oaths Act, 1888.

Cooper was to affirm "the Being of God as the Maker of the Universe," and on the second "the Being of God as the Moral Governor of the Universe." As the affirmer he had the advantage of leading the discussion each night.

The wording of the question put Mr Bradlaugh in a peculiar position: he was "to state the argument on the Negative side," and as any reasonable person will, I think, clearly see, he could only do this by showing the fallacy of the arguments used by the affirmer. He told his audience: "I do not stand here to prove that there is no God. If I should undertake to prove such a proposition I should deserve the ill words of the oft-quoted Psalmist applied to those who say there is no God. I do not say there is no God, but I am an Atheist without God. To me the word 'God' conveys no idea, and it is because the word 'God' to me never expressed a clear and definite conception . . . . that I am Atheist, ... The word 'God' does not, to my mind, express an eternal, infinite, omnipotent, intelligent, personal conscious being, but is a word without meaning and no effect other than it derives from the passions and prejudices of those who use it."

This debate should have been of more than ordinary interest; both disputants were lecturers and debaters of long standing, and as an exponent of the evidences of Christianity Mr Thomas Cooper's reputation was, I believe, considerable. And since he had himself once spoken from the Freethought standpoint, he, more than another, should have been prepared to grapple with the difficulties which lay between the Atheist and a belief in God the Creator and Moral Governor of the Universe. Having read his speeches, I am surprised at the poorness of his arguments, and am driven to the conclusion that his reputation has been considerably overstated—that is to say, his reputation as an expounder of Christian doctrines: his language was sometimes absolutely childish; of his merits as a poet I know nothing. "B. V." wrote some amusing verses* descriptive of Mr Cooper's position as laid down by him in his opening speech, and a writer in the *Christian Times* for February 3rd related the impression produced on him by Mr Bradlaugh on the first night:

"Let me do this gentleman justice. He was neither vulgar nor arrogantly egotistical. He has a loud, harsh voice. He is thoroughly

* See "Poems, Essays, and Fragments." (A. and H. B. Bonner).

earnest in address. His thoughts come to him with admirable orderliness. His logical faculty is strong, and his speaking faculty is something to be amazed at. He combines precision with volubility. He makes argument rhetorically climacteric. In retort, by-play, and insinuation, he evinces very considerable skill. He is an adept in the use of satire. His style is sharp, clear, incisive. In short, he is evidently a young man of somewhat remarkable abilities, who with his present opinions must do much mischief, but under a holier inspiration would do immense good. In saying this about him, I am but speaking honest truth. I have already said with what a prejudice against him I went to the hall. I am frank enough to confess that I found that prejudice to be to a great extent based on ignorance of the man. It has been the custom of many Christian organs to hold the teachers of Atheism up to scorn for ignorance, conceit, incapacity, and a wanton indulgence in gross and vulgar blasphemies. Often enough the representation has been only too faithful; but it would be simply an absurd and self-refuting falsehood to charge any of these things on Mr Bradlaugh, as far as his behaviour on Monday night would enable one to form an estimate of his character. He used sharp weapons, it is true, but he used them skilfully; he had a most repulsive task, granted, but he came up to it with a manly candour and went through it without resorting to a word, gesture, or glance that was indicative of the desire to be unnecessarily offensive."*

I have taken this somewhat lengthy extract from the article as giving a frank avowal of a prejudgment of my father, unwarranted by the real facts as realised by a Christian auditor. And yet it was in these early years that Mr Bradlaugh is said to have been so "unnecessarily offensive" by those who during the last few years of his life were compelled to own that he was not so bad after all. These persons, lacking the generous candour of the writer in the *Christian Times* of 1864, endeavour to excuse their earlier injustice by saying that, if not coarse and offensive now, he had been at one time, and his manners had much improved. This quotation may serve, to those who still need it, as a hostile contemporary witness in Mr Bradlaugh's favour.

On September 25th and 26th, 1865, Mr Bradlaugh had yet

* Despite the sharpness—to use no harsher term—of Mr Cooper's words and manner towards him, my father bore no malice, and showed himself quite ready to forgive and forget. A few months later, hearing that Mr Cooper was in very straitened circumstances, he expressed his desire to be allowed to join in the scheme for assisting his old opponent, for he believed him "to have been a well-intentioned, warm-hearted man, and one who, as a politician, has done good work."

another debate with his Swedenborgian antagonist, the Rev. Woodville Woodman. The debate was held in the theatre at Northampton, which was crowded, numbers of people being unable to obtain admission on the first night. He had arranged for a three nights' discussion six weeks later at Keighley with the Rev. Mr Porteous of Glasgow. He was to lecture at Liverpool on Sunday, October 29th, and the debate was down for the following Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On the Saturday the express train in which he was travelling to Liverpool ran into some luggage vans between Woodhouse and Sheffield, and he was very severely shaken. How severely he did not at once realise, and with his usual disregard of himself he insisted upon fulfilling his engagement at Liverpool. After the exertion of delivering three lectures he felt so much worse that the journey to Keighley, followed by three nights' discussion, seemed out of the question. He communicated with Mr Porteous and came home; I have a distinct recollection of seeing my father come into the house, looking terribly ill. The Rev. Mr Porteous refused to postpone his engagement; in fact, he never answered Mr Bradlaugh's letter, but insisted on proceeding in his absence. For the first two nights he "debated" in solitary grandeur, but on the third night Mr Bradlaugh was represented by Mr John Watts, who, "at Iconoclast's request," went to Keighley to meet Mr Porteous on one night at least. The committee of the Rev. Mr Porteous paid their champion out of the proceeds, but "*he nevertheless afterwards claimed and received from Iconoclast the further sum of* £2 10s., *not for expenses, but to make up his 'fee.'*"* In June of the following year Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing at Keighley, and when he arrived there he found the walls of the town and neighbourhood placarded with a "Challenge to the Image Breaker" from Mr Porteous. This "challenge" rather prematurely assumed reluctance on Mr Bradlaugh's part; it was at once accepted, and the debate fixed for two or three days later, the 14th and 15th June. The subject for the discussion, which was held in the Temperance Hall, was "Is the Bible a divine revelation?" and people attended from Burnley, Leeds, Bradford, and outlying districts; but judging from a brief report which is all I have to guide me,

* *National Reformer*, June 24th, 1866.

I doubt whether it was much worth a journey to listen to. Mr Porteous angrily spoke of my father as

"one who, being a lawyer's clerk, had never been trusted with a brief; but who, in swollen rhetoric and with blatant voice, had indulged in misstatements and misrepresentations of the Bible which nothing could justify."*

It is rather curious to note, too, that during the evening the Rev. Mr Porteous, just as the Rev. Brewin Grant had done on a former occasion, strongly complained that Iconoclast looked at him whilst he was speaking." †

---

* *National Reformer*, June 24th, 1866.

† "Look at me," said Bagheera, and Mowgli looked at him steadily between the eyes. The big panther turned his head away in half a minute.

"*That* is why," he said, shifting his paw on the leaves, "not even I can look thee between the eyes, and I was born among men, and I love thee, little brother. The others they hate thee, because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise; because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet; because thou art a man!"

Mowgli's Brothers, by RUDYARD KIPLING.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE WORLD IS MY COUNTRY, TO DO GOOD IS MY RELIGION."

A DEMONSTRATION was held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon, September 28th, 1862, for the purpose of expressing sympathy with Garibaldi, and protesting against the occupation of Rome by the French troops. The hour announced for the meeting was three o'clock, and by that time the *Morning Advertiser* estimated that there were between 12,000 and 15,000 persons present. The proceedings were, however, very badly managed; no steps whatever were taken for keeping order, and, indeed, by three o'clock none of the conveners of the meeting had put in an appearance, nor had any arrangements whatever been made for a platform for the speakers. Mr Bradlaugh had been asked to speak, and was, as a matter of course, punctually upon the scene. He found a ready-made platform in a great heap about fourteen yards by nine, and rising three feet from the ground. About this heap, upon which he and a few others had posted themselves, the crowd gathered, and at length Mr Bradlaugh, seeing no signs of the conveners, commenced to speak. He was soon stopped by interruptions of every kind, and to make things a little more regular, a chairman was appointed; but the chairman had hardly begun to address the people when he "was hurled with his friends from their seat of eminence by a movement which a few Irish roughs had organised in the rear of them, down amongst the crowd beneath. By remarkable dexterity, however, the chairman regained his place upon the mount." * His efforts to be heard were again unavailing, and the proceedings rapidly developed into a free fight.

"During one of the lulls in the fighting position of the affair," says the *Morning Advertiser*, "Mr Bradlaugh proposed a resolution to the effect that the meeting was of opinion that Garibaldi was faithfully

* *Morning Advertiser.*

doing his duty when he fell at Aspromonte, and desired to express its admiration of the heroic fortitude he displayed in his hour of trial."

The resolution was seconded and supported amid general uproar,

"while it was confidently stated that in the course of the discussion of it, and during one of the encounters for the possession of the platform, an attempt was made to stab Mr Bradlaugh." *

Thus an assemblage which should have done honour to Garibaldi as well as to England, for, as the *Advertiser* says, "it was composed of the élite of the working classes and a large portion of the middle class," was turned by the Irish Catholics into a fight and a panic calling for the interference of the police. It is little to be wondered at that when Mr Bradlaugh was invited by the Working Men's Committee to attend and speak he hesitated to accept the invitation, feeling as he did that the conveners were not able to control the antagonism of the Irish Catholics which had already manifested itself at other meetings. "I have no wish," he afterwards said, "for immediate martyrdom, and considerably abbreviated my speech when I found that knives were used as arguments."

---

* Mr Robert Forder, who was present at the Garibaldi meeting, sends me the following vivid account of what took place on that day:—

"That afternoon," he relates, "was the first time I had the honour and pleasure of speaking to your father. A few of us at Deptford, where I then resided, had had printed a quantity of handbills announcing the debate with the Rev. W. Barker, then appearing in the *National Reformer*. I gave your father one, for which he thanked me. I should like, with your permission, to add a few words as to what took place on that exciting afternoon. The Irish Catholics had been well whipped up for the occasion, and were there in force; most of them dock and bricklayers' labourers, and in the mass totally uneducated. There were three mounds of earth and stones intended to repair or make roads, each about four feet high, and, so far as I can recollect after thirty years have gone by, about thirty yards long by eight deep. These were about fifty yards apart, and on the middle one were gathered the men and two women—one of the latter in a red 'jumper,' that was afterwards known in fashion as a 'Garibaldi.' The Irish were massed on and around the two other mounds, and during the early part of the proceedings contented themselves with singing a refrain for 'God and Rome.' It was about ten minutes after your father had begun to speak that a signal was given, on which a sudden rush was made upon the meeting. There had not been up to this moment any indication whatever that the Irish were armed, but every man and woman (and there were many women and girls with them) was possessed of a bludgeon of some sort. Their onslaught was furious and

In the winter of 1862 Mr Bradlaugh made a public appeal to the Freethinkers of Great Britain to raise money on behalf of the distressed Lancashire operatives. He begged them to "waste no time, but at once in your large workshops and in your social meetings levy a rate for the reduction of the Lancashire distress." Those who were Freethinkers amongst the destitute in Lancashire were of course relieved by the General Relief Committee, but naturally they were excluded from the various charitable undertakings carried out by committees belonging to different denominations. As the relief afforded by the General Committee and the Board of Guardians only averaged 1s. 8½d. per head weekly, it will be seen how greatly dependent the distressed were upon the extra help of these other committees. A touching little story of Christian charity *versus* principle in rags was taken by Mr T. S. Oates, then Secretary to the Lancashire Secular Union Special Distress Fund, from the *Rochdale Observer* of Dec. 13th, and was, he said, a fair sample of what frequently happened. A benevolent lady belonging to Middleton, on making her usual charitable round, entered one day a house in Parkfield, where she found "poverty in its worst shape." The father of the family was in rags, and the lady told the man that if he would come to her house that evening she would give him other clothes. The man, of course, was overjoyed, but when

---

brutal, and for a time successful. They carried the mound in a few minutes, but the blood upon many of our friends aroused such a feeling of indignation, that in a time less than it takes me to write it the mound was stormed from the Piccadilly side, and again captured by us. There were in the crowd about a dozen Grenadier Guardsmen, who were ardent admirers of Garibaldi, and there were quite fifty others, possibly passive spectators. The former formed two deep, and with their walking-sticks rushed down the mound into the mass of the yelling Irish. The effect was electrical. Their comrades in the crowd raised a sudden shout, and in ten minutes the Irish were in full retreat, throwing away their sticks to escape the indignation of the people they had so wantonly and brutally attacked. Many were captured by the police, and I clearly remember the constables gathering up their bludgeons, and making bundles of them with their belts. It must be confessed that no quarter was given, and scores of them got severely mauled. Cardinal Wiseman referred to the brutality of the infidel mob in a pastoral a few days after, in which he used the term 'lambs' to describe these religious ruffians. *Punch*, the next week, 'caught on' to this word, and in its weekly cartoon depicted this mob of Irish assailing a public meeting over the heading of 'Cardinal Wiseman's Lambs.'"

he was told that after he had the clothes he would be expected to attend church, and if he did not do so the clothes were to be returned, his joy was considerably cooled down. Then it was said that

"after making her statement, the lady left to make further inquiries into the cases of distress, leaving the man of poverty to reflect on the offer made to him. After a short consideration he commenced looking at his unsightly apparel, and then muttered to himself: 'Yo mun poo me through a bit longer, owd friends; it'll do noan to pop mi conscience for a shute of cloas!'"

My father did not preach without practising, although to me it is marvellous how, with his own struggle for existence, he always found a way to help others in their struggles. But this winter it was especially hard: several times he was called away to the Continent, and several times his health broke down, until he was so ill that he had to give up editing his paper, and for some months was also obliged to give up lecturing. Nevertheless, he contrived to keep an engagement he had made to lecture for the Relief Fund in Manchester on Feb. 1, 1863, in which he paid the whole of his own expenses, and so was able to hand £10 over to the Treasurer. Later on in the year he was lecturing again on behalf of the same object.

Almost concurrently with his efforts to raise money for Lancashire, he was making eloquent appeals for funds to aid Poland against her oppressors, and when he had somewhat recovered his health he addressed meetings on behalf of the struggling Poles. He spoke at Plumstead, Deptford, and Cleveland Hall, at Birmingham and Sheffield, where the fire and passion of his speeches evoked the utmost enthusiasm; at Halifax, where people walked eight and ten miles in the drenching rain to hear him, and at other places the details of which are not recorded. "Viva la Polonia" was a cry which, twenty years ago, found "a sympathising echo from every freeman in Europe, from every honest heart in the civilised world;" and my father was behind none in the warmth of his sympathy, or in the activity he displayed to give it practical effect.

Neither, with all this public work, was he unmindful or ungrateful for kindnesses shown himself personally; and so he never forgot the debt he owed his early friend, Mr Jones, who now in

consequence of old age and infirmities was reduced to extreme poverty. In the November of this same year he gave the last of his annual lectures for the benefit of his staunch old friend. On this occasion, too, Mr Bendall, the lessee of the Hall of Science, gave the use of the hall—as indeed he frequently did, often at considerable inconvenience to himself—and the proceeds of the lecture and subscriptions amounted to upwards of £8, of which the greater part served to pay the funeral expenses of the brave old man, who, contemporary with Thomas Paine, had played his part in the struggles for a free press, particularly in those which we associate with the names of men like Richard Carlile, Wooler, and Hone.

In March 1864 occurred the great inundation at Sheffield; along the valleys of the Loxley and the Don all was ruin and desolation. Whole rows of houses, mills, and bridges were carried away, and huge trees were torn up by the force of the rushing water. Many lives were lost, and those who escaped with life lost every atom they possessed save the garments in which they escaped. Many funds were started for the relief of those so suddenly made destitute, and Mr Bradlaugh was not slow in offering his help. A Sheffield man, writing at the time, said that the quality of practical sympathy was one possessed by Mr Bradlaugh "in a pre-eminent degree, and it is a trait in his character which will add lustre to his name, and form a rich gem in the wreath which shall adorn his memory long after he shall have laid his honoured head in the silent tomb. . . . His large, generous heart is never insensible to the sounds of human distress; and accordingly no sooner did he hear of the Sheffield catastrophe than he at once volunteered his services towards the relief of the sufferers." *

I have mentioned these cases with the idea of showing how wide and how ready were my father's sympathies. To give money help was no easy matter to him: he could not write a cheque and say, "Put my name down for this sum or for that;" he could not even give by denying himself some little luxury: every penny he gave had to be specially earned for that purpose, but not-

* He gave two lectures in the Mechanics' Institute (lent to the Freethinker for this occasion), and the proceeds, £8 11s. 4d., were handed over to the fund. "No lecturer gave more to the needy than Iconoclast," said Mr Austin Holyoake.

withstanding this, real distress rarely appealed to him in vain.*

Unable to do so much provincial lecturing in consequence of the demands made upon his time by his business, Mr Bradlaugh was yet often to be found during the latter part of 1865 at the Hall of Science, City Road; but in the early part of 1866 he was away in Italy so much, sometimes for weeks together, that he could do very little lecturing. The proceeds of these winter lectures at the old Hall of Science were to go to the Hall of Science Company, which he was then actively projecting. The lease of the City Road Hall expired early in 1866, and the renewal had been refused. It was proposed to lease or purchase a suitable building, or a site of land on which to build a lecture-hall and rooms for classes for secular instruction, etc. To aid in providing funds for this purpose, it was Mr Bradlaugh's desire to purchase one hundred shares out of the proceeds of his lectures, and to that end he devoted the whole of his profits on each occasion that he lectured at the Hall of Science.

---

* One of the latest letters he ever wrote, bearing date Jan. 12, 1891, shows him always the same. He says: "I am extremely sorry to read your letter, but I have, unfortunately, no means whatever except what I earn from day to day with my tongue and pen. If the Committee think it wise, I will lecture for the benefit of such a fund."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REFORM LEAGUE, 1866–1868.

In 1866 the National Reform League was proving itself an extremely active organisation. Mr Edmund Beales was its honoured President, and Mr George Howell the Secretary. Mr Bradlaugh was one of its Vice-Presidents, and he had, oddly enough, amongst his colleagues the Rev. W. H. Bonner, the father of his future son-in-law. Mr Bonner had been, and was until his death in 1869, a Lecturer for the Peace Society, and was then a Vice-President and Lecturer of the Reform League. They worked together with the greatest cordiality, and Mr Bradlaugh on one occasion wrote that he wished there were more clergymen like the Rev. Mr Bonner. My father took part in most of the meetings of the League which were held in London and in many of those held in the provinces, and his value as an advocate was appreciated by men opposed to the Reform Bill—then before Parliament—as well as by those on his own side who were not blinded by bigotry.

On May 21st a great demonstration in support of the Bill was held upon Primrose Hill, and was addressed by Mr Beales, Mr Cremer, Colonel Dickson, Mr Lucraft, and others. Mr Bradlaugh moved the second resolution, and his eloquence so impressed the reporter to the *Standard* that that gentleman, who had assuredly come "to scoff," remained, if not "to pray," yet to give and record a reluctant admiration. The leader which appeared in the *Standard* for the following day was intended to be humorously descriptive of the proceedings without too fine a regard for facts; and in it we find the following notice of Mr Bradlaugh and his speech, which the writer said was frequently and enthusiastically applauded:

"At length, however, a young gentleman—by the name, we believe, of Bradlaugh—sprang into the chair, and for the moment awakened in

the wind-chilled throng a faint thrill of something like enthusiasm. At first, judging from the cast of his countenance and from a certain twinkle in his eye as he adjusted himself to his task, we anticipated a decidedly comic address. But the event soon showed that we were mistaken, and the speaker, admirably as his face was adapted for purposes of comedy, was himself terribly in earnest; so earnest, indeed, and so thoroughly *d'accord* with his audience, that he soon woke them up from the lethargy in which they had remained ever since the first old gentleman had begun to read to them the unpublished proofs of next morning's *Star*, and set them crying 'Hear, hear,' 'That's so,' 'Hurray,' 'Down with the Peers,' 'Shame, shame,' and so on. Bearing in mind the blood-red banner and the *bonnet rouge*, it is needless to say that the speech of this energetic gentleman—who, be it observed, spoke really extremely well—consisted simply of a furious onslaught upon English institutions in general, and upon Government and the House of Lords in particular. He would like to see that wretched institution that battened upon the life-blood of the English people swept away for ever; and here the Reformers cried 'Hear, hear,' and applauded with voice and hand. And that was what things were tending to; that was what this Bill really meant; and he differed from their worthy president —who had apparently been endeavouring to persuade the meeting to adopt that convenient little Liberal fib that the present Bill had really nothing democratic about it—in being ready and willing to take his stand as a supporter of the Government measure upon the ground that it was democratic, and that its real effect would be to sweep away the whole expensive machinery of the constitution, Government itself included. All this, of course, everybody knew before, but it is not every Liberal Reformer who is bold enough to say it. . . . . The speaker concluded with a significant reminder that on this occasion they were allowed to meet undisturbed, because they met in support of a Government measure, but that their normal condition—he did not say normal, but that was the meaning of it—was one of opposition to all Government, and that he might have to call upon them to meet here or elsewhere, or even under the walls of the sham Parliament at Westminster, when the whole strength of Government would be put forth to prevent the meeting, and when the English people would rise in their might," etc.

The sarcasm and humour of the foregoing make it no easy matter to pick out the scattered grains of truth: nevertheless, we may gather from it that the boldness, earnestness, and eloquence of the "young gentleman by the name, we believe, of Bradlaugh," did this much—it made an unusual impression upon his Tory listener.

At a great gathering * held in Trafalgar Square on the 2nd of July, my father was one of the speakers. Lord Russell and Mr Gladstone had resigned from the Ministry, and Lord Derby had been "sent for." Parliament stood adjourned until July 5th, and the Reform League held this meeting prior to the reassembling of the House to protest against the proposed Derby administration, and to deplore the retirement of Mr Gladstone and Lord Russell. There was unusual excitement about this meeting, for Sir Richard Mayne had first of all intimated that it would not be allowed to take place. He, however, met with such a strenuous outburst of condemnation that for the moment he was checked, and withdrew his prohibition. By this time Mr Bradlaugh's popularity in London was becoming very great, and in the *Times*' notice of the meeting it is remarked that he was the chief favourite, and that "the mass soon commenced clamouring" for him.

The Derby Cabinet, as every one is aware, was formed with Disraeli † in Gladstone's place as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and with the formation of the new Cabinet all immediate hopes of the passing of any real measure of Reform were abandoned, although the League continued its work with untiring energy. An utterance of Mr Bradlaugh's on the chief point in the programme of Reform then advocated, viz. extension of the Suffrage, is worth repeating here, as it indicates a line of conduct which Mr Bradlaugh himself pursued and enjoined upon others in regard to other matters of Reform than the Suffrage. He would always seek and work for a thorough and complete measure; but if he could not get all that he asked for, rather than have nothing, and thus leave matters in the bad state in which he found them, he would take what ameliorations he could get *without ceasing to aim at ultimately winning the whole.* He had, at the time of which I am writing, occasion to allude to a little pamphlet published in 1838. He remarked:—

"The author says well when he tells you, 'Demand universal Suffrage;' but I am not quite sure that he is right in saying,

* The number of persons present was variously estimated at from 30,000 to "upwards of 60,000."

† Mr Bradlaugh commented somewhat epigrammatically: "The Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli is perhaps the man best fitted to be in opposition, and the least fitted to govern amongst our prominent men. His waistcoats have been brilliant, but his Parliamentary measures cannot always successfully compare with the result of his tailor's skill."

'Take no less than your full demand.' He is right in declaring the Suffrage a natural right, and therefore undoubtedly all our agitation should be based on this principle; but I am not of opinion that the extension of the Suffrage to a portion of the working or middle classes necessarily makes them enemies to their unenfranchised brethren. Each step in the Reform movement, whether theological, social, or political, is educational in its effects even beyond the circle in which the step is taken. My advice would be: Seek justice; but refuse no point which may be conceded, for each concession gives you additional means and strength to enforce your claim. The people are growing stronger and more worthy every day; but there are, alas! even yet in this country hundreds of thousands who are intellectually too weak for, and apparently hardly worthy of, enfranchisement. Our mission is to educate them to strength and worthiness, to strip off the badge of servitude they wear, to teach them that labour's rights and duties are as honourable and onerous as the rights and duties of the wealthiest employer of labour, and that the labourer—if honest and true to his manhood—has a higher patent of nobility than was ever given by yellow parchment or crumbling seal."

The Tories had declared that the people themselves did not want any extension of the suffrage, and spoke sneeringly of the apathy and indifference of the working classes towards any measure of enfranchisement. Determined to show they were not apathetic, working men in London and the provinces held meeting after meeting. The one in Trafalgar Square was followed three weeks later by that famous gathering in Hyde Park, when the railings "came down." This meeting was announced for Monday, July 22nd, but a few days before the time arrived Sir Richard Mayne posted a notification on the park gates forbidding the meeting to take place; and this time Sir Richard Mayne held to his prohibition. The Council of the National Reform League met on the 20th specially to consider this police order; Mr Beales, the president, stated the case as impartially as possible, and put the legal difficulties before the Council. Mr Bradlaugh moved that notwithstanding the police notice of prohibition the meeting be persisted in. Mr Cremer and others opposed the resolution, but when it was put it was carried by a large majority. Mr Bradlaugh put himself entirely under the direction of Mr Beales, and it was arranged that at the given time the leaders of the demonstration

should appear at the Marble Arch and demand admission into the park; if this was refused, having made their protest, they should separate into divisions and proceed quietly by different routes to Trafalgar Square.

When the time came, procession after procession marched in orderly fashion to the park gates, and the meeting became a truly magnificent one, composed as it was mainly of respectable working men, thoroughly earnest in their desire for Reform. They were not all Londoners either; there were representative men from the provinces, from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Plymouth, and other parts, men who had travelled many miles and undergone much fatigue to take part in the forbidden demonstration. From a brief notice of the meeting which Mr Bradlaugh wrote for the *National Reformer*, it appears that Mr Beales and the committee reached the Marble Arch Gates shortly after seven o'clock, and leaving their vehicles they went together to the police at the gate to demand admission. "The police, however, meant mischief; one mounted man, 'V. 32,' backed his horse right on to Mr Beales and myself, and the example being followed by another mounted policeman, some confusion was created, and this was evidently the result desired by the police. The truncheons were all out, and some rough intimations given to those in front that mischief was meant." On his demand being made and refused, Mr Beales and his colleagues turned, as had been arranged, to lead the meeting by different routes to Trafalgar Square. Mr Bradlaugh's division turned down Park Lane, but some of those on the outside, being irritated by the behaviour of the police, made an attack upon the railings of the Park. Having read numerous accounts of this episode, I should judge that the first railings fell partly accidentally through the enormous pressure of the moving crowd, and were partly torn up in anger. When a few rails had given way, the idea of gaining ingress to the park in that manner spread through the crowd like a flash of light, and in a few minutes many yards of railings were upon the ground and the people leaping excitedly over them. Mr Bradlaugh, strenuously adhering to the programme of his leader to carry the meeting to Trafalgar Square, set himself to the difficult task of restraining the wild tumult and preventing the mass from destroying the railings and forcing an entry. After a little, although not before he himself had been knocked down, he was successful, and his column resumed its orderly and peaceful

march to Trafalgar Square, "whence, after much speechifying, we all went home." The *Times* remarked that in his efforts to prevent a breach of the peace "Mr Bradlaugh got considerably hustled . . . . falling under the suspicion of being a government spy." It is little to be wondered at that the people hardly knew friend from foe, for the confusion and excitement were so great that they were for a moment bewildered. The police, said the *Morning Star*,

"hit out with their truncheons like savages who, having been under temporary control, were now at full liberty to break heads and cut open faces to their hearts' content. It mattered not to them whether the interloper had actively exerted himself to force an entrance, or whether he had been merely hurled in the irresistible crush of those who pressed behind. Wherever there was a skull to fracture, they did their best to fracture it; everybody was in their eyes an enemy to whom no mercy was to be shown. The mob was at first stunned by the vigour of the assault, but presently turned upon the aggressors and repaid blows with their kind—in the end inflicting as much punishment as they received."

In any case the police attempt to prevent the people entering the park was futile, for although the more orderly passed on to the appointed meeting-place, in the course of half-an-hour many thousands gained admission through the openings made in the railings. At length, the police confessing themselves powerless, the military were called out and marched through the park. Lord Derby, in the House of Lords, asserted that altogether not less than 1400 yards of railings were pulled down, and complained loudly of the injury done to the flower-beds and other "property of the Crown;" but on this head a rather remarkable statement was made by Mr Cowper, M.P., formerly First Commissioner of the Works, who expressed himself against holding public meetings in the Park. Mr Cowper said that when the crowd (composed, according to the *Times*, of "London roughs") had

"forced down the railings and made good their entrance to the Park, they abstained from injuring the flowers, and even in the heat and hurry of the disturbance, they frequently went round along the grass so as not to tread upon the flower-beds and borders."

After all their prohibitions and precautions to prevent the people from holding orderly meeting and giving public expression to their opinion, backed too as they were by police and soldiers, the Government could only feebly say in the House that the measures

they had taken had prevented "some part of the contemplated proceedings from taking place." They might also have truthfully added that these same measures had also brought about the destruction of the Park railings, and numerous broken heads, "proceedings" which were not "contemplated," at least, by the conveners of the meeting.

A week later, before the excitement had time to cool down, another great meeting was held in the Agricultural Hall, and I have often heard my father say he had never seen gathered together in any building so many men as found their way into the Agricultural Hall on that occasion. He reckoned there must have been upwards of 25,000 persons present, without counting those who came and went away in despair at not being able to see or hear on the outskirts of so large a crowd. The great difficulty seems to have been to hear the speakers, and with such a vast assembly it is not surprising to find that many of them could only be heard by those nearest to the platform. Mr Bradlaugh himself felt how impossible it was to make every one hear. He moved the second resolution, praying the House of Commons to institute an inquiry into the conduct of Sir Richard Mayne and his subordinates at Hyde Park on the previous Monday, and wound up what the *Times* describes as a "telling speech," with his favourite quotation from Shelley's "Masque of Anarchy."

One of the results of this week of disturbance was the arrest of several "good men and true," amongst whom was Mr Nieass, whose recent death his friends and co-workers have good reason to mourn. On the evening of July 25th Mr Bradlaugh was suddenly summoned to Bow Street; some member of the Reform League Council was reported to be under arrest. When he reached the police station he found Mr Nieass, who had been seized by the police in the Strand on a charge of inciting the people to resistance, whereas, as it was afterwards proved, he had been persuading them to disperse, and but for Mr Bradlaugh's pertinacity, Mr Nieass would have been, as others actually were, locked up all night, in spite of the fact that good bail was offered.

The Reform movement seem to grow and spread through England with marvellous rapidity. The great meetings in London found their echo in great meetings in the provinces. As Mr Bradlaugh was not possessed of any mysterious power of reduplicating himself, he was not of course present at all these gatherings,

although he somehow (I hardly know how) contrived to make time to attend a goodly number. On the first day of September, 12,000 persons met at short notice on Brandon Hill, Bristol, Mr Beales and Mr Bradlaugh attending as a deputation from London. I find it noted* that Mr Bradlaugh was much applauded during his address, and that he sat down amidst long and continued cheering and waving of hats. In the *Bristol Times and Mirror* there is a letter about the meeting from "A Man in the Crowd," and among much that was hostile and absurd he wrote: "The speech that told more than any other on Brandon Hill was that of Charles Bradlaugh, Esq., and it was the best portion of it that was appreciated; . . . . his exhortation to men to be manly carried his hearers along with him. . . . . Nothing was listened to after Mr Bradlaugh had finished." In a day or so, however, the good people of Bristol began to realise who this eloquent man was who had so moved that great crowd, and two days later he was referred to in the *Times and Mirror* in most abusive and scurrilous terms, whilst the *Wiltshire County Mirror* tried to work upon the imagination of its more timid readers by drawing a lurid picture of what was likely to happen if the Reformers were triumphant: "Mr Beales is not a professed infidel, we believe, but we are persuaded that his religious convictions and feelings are of a very indiarubber kind. . . . . Let these two gentlemen [Mr Bradlaugh and Mr G. J. Holyoake] have their way, and there would be an end to the institution of marriage, and communism with all its abominations would be established amongst us." When a too fertile imagination has carried a man thus far it is difficult to see why he should not put even a little more colour on to his brush; as it was, his statements only frightened "old ladies" (masculine and feminine), and so served the purpose of political, religious, or social intriguers. In this case it was the political intriguers who were specially served, for it was considered a capital notion to associate Mr Beales—and through him the cause of Reform—with "Infidelity," the abolition of "the institution of marriage," and the "abominations" of Communism. The four ideas well mixed together by not over-scrupulous writers, formed such a fine jumble that the ignorant and pious could not always distinguish the one from the other.

---

* The *Bristol Daily Post*.

In London, during the autumn and winter, Mr Bradlaugh spoke for the Reform League at Chelsea, Cleveland Hall, Battersea, Pimlico, South Lambeth, the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, and many other places, but the note we found struck in the *Wiltshire County Mirror* reverberated with such force that at length my father said that he was not sure whether "the course taken by the cowardly respectable press in denouncing the movement as an infidel one, may not render it wiser for me to leave the platform advocacy of Reform at the large gatherings to men whose religious or irreligious views are not so well known as my own." But when a few weeks later he was re-elected upon the Executive of the Reform League, he resolved to allow no sneer at his creed to influence him; no slander to make him hesitate, but to do his best, whatever that best might be, to aid in winning the battle

"between Tory obstructiveness and the advancing masses; between vested interests and human happiness; between pensioned and salaried lordlings and landowners' off-shoots on the one hand, and the brown-handed bread-winner on the other." "The people must win," he said.

Yes, "the people must win"—in the end; but complete manhood suffrage is not ours yet, and universal suffrage is still far off. "The people must win," but Oh how long the winning; and alas! the cost to the victors.

In October Mr Bradlaugh was speaking for the League in Northampton. I wonder whether there are Northampton men who still remember that Reform demonstration held in their town in the autumn of sixty-six, when they carried out their programme in the pelting, pitiless rain, just as "cheerily and as steadfastly as though it had been sunshine and a clear sky." Do they remember the procession, I wonder, when men and women marched through the incessant downpour, the women as earnest as the men? And the meetings in the Corn Exchange and the Mechanics' Institute, where Mr Bradlaugh's speeches were received with great applause by an enthusiastic audience? There was a meeting at the Town Hall too, to which he went at Col. Dickson's invitation; though on arriving it was only to find that the Town Hall was reserved for the "respectable great guns," and therefore there was no room for him on that platform. But other times, other customs, and many a time has the Northampton Town Hall rung with his

voice since that wet October day twenty-eight years ago, when, "too proud to intrude," he went away slighted and scorned.

Great spontaneity and heartiness met him at Luton, which, "though a small town in a small county, gave us great welcome," said Mr Bradlaugh. It had been arranged that a conference of delegates (amongst whom were Mr Beales and Mr Bradlaugh, representing London) should be held previous to the Town Hall meeting, at Messrs Willis & Co.'s factory, but, much to the amazement of the delegates, when they reached the factory gates they found a meeting of several thousand persons collected there without call or summons; the gathering was such as "no living man had ever seen in that still increasing town." * Every one was so anxious to hear the speakers from London and elsewhere that the conference of delegates was abandoned, and a public meeting was at once held in Park Square, an open space in the centre of the town. The *Mercury* devoted a little leader to this Reform demonstration at Luton, in which it said that

"the terse and argumentative speech of Mr Bradlaugh roused the feelings of the thousands assembled to their highest pitch, and as he put the case of reform in a clear light he was most enthusiastically applauded."*

In the course of his address, which was interrupted again and again by the cheering of his audience, he felt it incumbent upon him to deny that these meetings partook of the character of physical force demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of working men, he pointed out, had assembled and kept their own order even when the police in their officiousness had failed to preserve it. This denial was made necessary by the attitude taken up by the Tories and weak Liberals who began to be frightened by the growth of popular opinion as exhibited in these great and orderly outdoor and indoor meetings which were taking place every week in London and the provinces. In order to hide their fear of *opinion* they began to pretend fear of physical force, and by dint of crying "Wolf" often and loudly they did not turn belief into disbelief like the boy in the story, but reversed the process, and were at length believed by men who ought

---

* *Bedford Mercury* of November 24th.

† The *Morning Star* (London) of November 22nd also notes the enthusiasm provoked by Mr Bradlaugh's "animated speech."

to have known a great deal better. Take, for example, Matthew Arnold, who a year or so later made a wholly unprovoked attack upon Mr Bradlaugh, speaking of him as "Mr Bradlaugh, the Iconoclast, who seems to be almost for baptizing us all in blood and fire into his new social dispensation;" and again, "Mr Bradlaugh is evidently capable, if he had his head given him, of running us all into great dangers and confusion."* The pious journals were of course always and increasingly alarmed at the growing popular influence of the hated and despised Atheist, and tried their best to counteract it, each according to its lights. The most common way was to decry him: thus he was not "endowed with superior attainments," nor had he "any faculty or power of teaching other men." And after devoting a column or so to showing how mean were his intellectual powers, the Christian critic would then proceed in the like amiable fashion to decry Mr Bradlaugh's personal appearance.

Just about this time Mr Bradlaugh expressed himself upon a small matter which will strike a chord in the memories of many of those who took part in meetings with him. I mean bands at processions. He said he was glad to note "a strong disposition on the part of the Executive [of the Reform League] to avoid the use of bands of music in our future processions. Ten thousand men tramping seriously along the streets towards Westminster will be unmistakable evidence of our earnestness." This is the first public expression of his feeling on this subject that I have come across, but there will still be many who can recall how much Mr Bradlaugh objected to a serious procession being accompanied by flying flags and a beating drum. A gala meeting on a Northumberland or Durham moor was one thing, but men proceeding together in orderly fashion to soberly demand a right or strenuously protest against a wrong was another. But people like noise and merriment, even when they are very much in earnest, and my father often had to submit to the band and the banner, although in his heart he wished them well at home.

He generously determined that his lectures should not cos the League one farthing. True, his Freethought friends helped him as much as lay in their power, but they were poor, and the

* Essay in *Cornhill Magazine*, 1868, reprinted in book form as "Culture and Anarchy."

demands upon their purses many, so that at the end of the year 1866 he found that in work for the League he had spent out of his own pocket £30 in mere travelling and hotel expenses.

At the quarterly election of officers in December 1866 Mr Bradlaugh was again elected upon the Executive, and he appealed to his friends to show renewed activity in the time of hard work which he felt lay before them. On February 11th (1867) the League held two mass meetings, one in the afternoon at Trafalgar Square, and one in the evening at the Agricultural Hall. The Trafalgar Square meeting was, if possible, "more complete, more orderly, and more resolute" than any previous one. Mr Baxter Langley and Mr Bradlaugh were appointed "deputy marshals;" they were mounted, and wore tri-coloured scarves and armlets (I have my father's now). It was their special duty to see that order was kept, and their office was no sinecure; for although the main body was entirely orderly, still on the outskirts there was a fair sprinkling of people who had come "to see the fun," and were bent on seeing it, even if they had to make it for themselves. One form of creating "fun" was the snatching off hats and throwing them into the fountain basins; another was throwing stones from above on to the crowd below. This dangerous amusement was checked by Mr Bradlaugh, who, singling out a young fellow who had thrown a stone from the front of the National Gallery, rode his horse right up the steps in pursuit. The young man escaped amongst his companions, but Mr Bradlaugh's energy stopped that form of "fun." That poor little brown horse! It would be difficult to say which was the more tired, horse or rider, before they parted company that day; the horse was small—as I have heard my father say—for the weight it had to carry, and my father had not crossed a horse since he left the army in 1853. For six and a half hours they kept order together, and both must have been heartily glad when they reached the Agricultural Hall, and the little brown horse went home to his stall and his supper whilst Mr Bradlaugh went inside to speak.*

* In a general "damnatory" description of the demonstration given from "a club window," which appeared in the *Times* of February 12th, there is a caricature of Mr Bradlaugh, spiteful in intent, but amusing and really interesting if one looks between the would-be scornful words. We are told that "a dapper youth, mounted on a brown horse, exerted himself to make up

The day wound up with the meeting in the Agricultural Hall, which was addressed by professors, clergymen, and members of Parliament, Irishmen, Scotchmen, and men like Ernest Jones, directly representing the working men. Never was there such a wonderful sight as this gathering. At the previous Agricultural Hall meeting "the vast hall presented a surging mass of human beings without form or coherence;" this time it was a solid body of thousands upon thousands of citizens with faces all anxiously upturned towards the platform. I know not whether it was arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should be one of the speakers or not, but in any case he was called for again and again by the audience, and in response made a brief but earnest speech.

At the next quarterly meeting of the Reform League he was re-elected on the Executive by a vote of five-sixths of those present, although he had made a grave declaration to the Council "that events were possible which would necessitate holding meetings under conditions forbidden by Act of Parliament, and that he, having determined if needful to resist the Government decision as to Hyde Park, did not desire to remain on the Executive of a body whom he might injure by a policy too advanced."

The storm of abuse now broke over Mr Bradlaugh's head in full force—always with intent to damage the Reform League, for his enemies had not yet taken the measure of his power and proportions. For the moment he was merely considered as a weapon,

---

for the shortcomings of the public force, and was a host in himself. He was evidently a man in authority, and acted in close connection with the Reform magnates, whose carriages stopped the way before our doors. He raised his whip as freely as if it had been a constable's truncheon or gendarme's broadsword, and apostrophised, or—why should I not say the word—bullied the crowd in a tone and with manners which would have done an alguazil's heart good. The sovereign people put up with the man's arrogance with incredible meekness and patience, and allowed itself to be marshalled hither and thither as if the Queen's highway were the Leaguers' special property and the public were mere intruders."

The "Club" man was evidently irritated that these same people who at Hyde Park had refused to obey a police proclamation backed by a free use of the truncheon and display of the bayonet, yet implicitly obeyed the "youth mounted on a brown horse" whose only authority was derived from the love the people bore him. The sneer as to "tone" and "manners" is not worth noticing; you cannot issue commands to tens of thousands in Trafalgar Square in the same gentle tone in which you can ask for the salt to be passed across the dinner-table.

to be used unscrupulously, and pointed with lies. In this method of warfare the *Saturday Review** at one bound took a front place. The *Standard* on the 11th of March reprinted from it the article, "Who are the Leaguers?" from which journals all over the country took their lead. It was in this article of the *Saturday Review* that Mr Bradlaugh is made responsible for the story of the "Fanatical Monkeys" written by Charles Southwell (who probably derived it from some old fable), and rewritten from memory by J. P. Adams, who sent it to the *National Reformer*, where it was published on February 17, 1867. This story was reproduced in a hundred shapes, and of course my father was said to be the author of all of them, a proof, asserted these veracious ones, of his utter depravity. I have noted a letter of Mr Bradlaugh's, written in 1868, in which he asked to deny the story for at least "the hundredth time;" but denial was of little use; the lie sown by the *Saturday Review* in March 1867, like most other ill weeds, throve apace, and was even repeated so late as two years ago. Speaking in Trafalgar Square on March 11th, where as usual he was "loudly called for," † he said those who were carrying on the struggle had not entered into it without counting the cost, and, confident in their own strength and manhood, they were determined upon gaining their rights. He compared the people with a "resistless wave," and warned those who should dare "to stem the tide." The *Weekly Dispatch* jeered at "the figurative Bradlaugh" for this speech, and, trying in its turn to injure the Reform League, suggested that the demonstrations were more welcome to the thieves than to any other class of metropolitan society. Others, like the *Sunday Times*, struck with the determination and confident purpose betokened in such a speech, chose to interpret it to mean physical force, and said—

"The Reform Leaguers throughout the country are beginning to talk treason and must be watched. 'Iconoclast,' who, but for his disposition to violence, would be altogether too vulgar for notice, systematically threatens violation of the law, and defiance of the powers that be."

The *Sunday Times* then went on, in the same paragraph, to speak in terms of reprobation of "a person" who, at some meeting at Newcastle, urged that an attempt should be made to win the sympathies of the army, so that in the event of "a collision" the

* March 9th, 1867.

† *Times*, March 12th, 1867.

people and the army would be on the same side. The remarks of an unnamed person at some meeting at which Mr Bradlaugh was not even present, were thus used as though he were responsible for them.

Lord Derby's Government began to be frightened at the possibilities evoked by its own fears and the determined persistence of the League. Special reporters were sent to the meetings in order to verify speeches for the purposes of a prosecution, a course which merely made the speakers more stern and more outspoken. In May it was resolved to hold another mass meeting in Hyde Park: the Reform League leaders were convinced that they had the law on their side, and they meant to insist on their rights. Mr Edmund Beales issued an address to the men of London, calling upon them to meet the Council of the League in Hyde Park on Monday evening, May 6th. "Come," he said, "as loyal, peaceful, and orderly citizens, enemies of all riot and tumult, but unalterably fixed and resolved in demanding and insisting upon what you are entitled to. If time presses, stay not to form in processions, but come straight from your work, come without bands and banners." On the same evening that Mr Beales' address was read over to the Council of the League, an "admonition" from the Government was served upon the delegates, warning all persons "to abstain from attending, aiding, or taking part in any such meeting, or from entering the Park with a view to attend, aid, or take part in such meeting."

Much pressure was put upon Mr Beales to prevent the meeting from being held, but he, knowing that he and his colleagues were in the right, and *knowing that the Government knew it also*, persisted in the determination arrived at, after due deliberation, by the Council. The Government reluctantly, and at the last moment—that is, in the issue of the *Times* for May 6th—acknowledged that they had no power to eject the demonstrators from the Park. Having decided that they had not the law on their side, Lord Derby, snatching at a straw, thought the Park regulations would help them, and sent a message to the League in the afternoon that the meeting would be prohibited; and there was a talk of prosecuting for trespass each person who had received the notice of prohibition. But all this "tall talk" was absolutely without effect: 200,000 persons went to the Park. Mr Bradlaugh was one of the first to enter, and Platform No. 8 was a "very great

centre of attraction, for this was the scene of Mr Bradlaugh's oratory." *

Mr Bradlaugh was, as I said, re-elected on the Executive of the League on the full understanding that he had determined to resist the Government decision as to Hyde Park. During the spring-time he lectured week after week in London and the provinces, not only bearing his own expenses, but on one occasion, at least, actually paying for tickets for his wife and friends. On May 6th, the demonstration maintaining the right of the people to meet in the people's park was held, in spite of Lord Derby's opposition and prohibition. On the following day, May 7th, Mr Bradlaugh tendered his resignation as vice-president and member of the Council and the Executive of the Reform League; he took this course "in order to deprive the enemies of reform of the pretext for attack on the League afforded by my irreligion, and to save some of the friends of the League from the pain of having their names associated with my own." Especially Mr Bradlaugh praises the honourable and straightforward conduct of Mr Beales, but deeply regrets that he (Mr Beales) should have felt it necessary publicly to disclaim responsibility for his sayings, and hopes that his resignation will relieve him from pain. The League only accepted Mr Bradlaugh's resignation, as far as it related to the Executive Council; he continued a Vice-President of the League from its foundation to the end, but after this date he rarely appeared upon its platforms. If there should be trouble, and his services were desired, he said, he was ready to do his duty; otherwise he preferred to remain aloof. Now, mark the generosity of his opponents! Finding he did not appear as frequently as before on the Reform platform, they began to circulate every reason for his abstention save the true one—his honourable desire to aid the cause of Reform even to the extent of self-effacement, since his persecutors made that necessary. The *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1868 said:

"Mr Bradlaugh, who furnished the *Saturday Reviewers* with an additional sting to articles in which his name was coupled with Mr Beales', avowed Atheistical views, but they met with so little favour that he had to leave the Committee of the Reform Association because he brought discredit on the cause."

Mr Bradlaugh in reply asked if it was true his views found "little

* The *Standard*, May 7th.

favour," and answering his own question said, "Let the audiences crowding the theatre at Huddersfield, the circus at Grimsby, the theatre at Northampton, the halls in London, Dublin, Newcastle, Ashton, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, and Bradford—let these enthusiastic audiences reply." And, in conclusion, he printed this letter from Mr Beales in reply to his resignation, which he had received in the previous May, but now for the first time made public.

"4 Stone's Buildings, Lincoln's Inn,
17*th May* 1867.

"My Dear Sir,—Pray excuse my not having sooner answered, or noticed, your letter of the 7th inst. to me, tendering your resignation as a member of the Executive of the Reform League, and asking that your name may be erased from the list of the Council and Vice-Presidents. I really have been in such a whirl of occupation since receiving your letter that it was not in my power sooner to write to you, as I wished. Meanwhile you have, I believe, received through Mr Cooper and others intimation that the Executive were unwilling to accept your resignation, and lose your services. In that unwillingness I concur, whilst I avail myself of this opportunity of communicating to you with the utmost openness and frankness, and with very sincere regard, my feelings in the matter. I have already expressed in public my strong sense of the services you have rendered to the League by your ability and good sense, and of the invariable fidelity, delicacy, and admirable taste with which you have studiously abstained from uttering a word at our meetings that could offend the religious scruples of the most sensitive or fastidious Christian. At the same time that your known and published opinions on these matters (I do not allude to the subject of the *Saturday Review's* savage attack, which was not, I believe, from your pen) have injured the League with many in a moral and pecuniary point of view must, I am afraid, be admitted, though I doubt whether such injury has outweighed the aid you have rendered to the League by your oratorical power and talent. At all events, I am not disposed to allow the evil to have outweighed the good. You say that the conduct of the Press in constantly coupling your name with mine has given me pain. Well, it has, but not quite from the cause you suppose. I despise from my soul the base motives of the writers in thus coupling our names together, and it would only make me more strongly tender to you the hand of friendship. But I do feel great pain at the thought of a man of your undoubted ability, and, I believe, purity of purpose and high honesty, being in such a position from your antagonism to Christianity as to make men imagine that they could pain or injure me or the League by thus coupling our names together.

"C. Bradlaugh. "E. Beales."

Mr George Howell, the Secretary, had also written expressing his deep regret at my father's resignation, and testifying to the kindly consideration shown himself, and to the earnest and powerful advocacy and support given to the objects of the League.

Probably in consequence of the form taken by these aspersions Mr Bradlaugh was again elected on the Executive Council in December 1868.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROVINCIAL LECTURING, 1866-1869.

I WILL take up once more the story of my father's lecturing experiences in the provinces by telling of the Mayor's attempt to prevent the delivery of some lectures he had agreed to give in Liverpool, in the middle of October 1866. The subjects to be dealt with were: "The Pentateuch: without it Christianity is nothing; with it, Humanity is impossible;" "The Twelve Apostles," and "Kings, Lords, and Commons." The bills announcing these particulars were posted all over the town, and seem to have much alarmed the Mayor. This gentleman was a Methodist, and held such peculiar ideas concerning the duties of chief magistrate of so important a place as Liverpool that he preferred, for example, attending a Scripture Readers' tea-party rather than the banquet given to the layers of the Atlantic Cable, at which he was expected. It can be easily understood that such a Mayor would be greatly disturbed by the possibility of an atheistic criticism of the Pentateuch and the twelve Apostles. So great was his perturbation that he consulted with the Chief Constable, Major Greig, with the result that the latter sent his subordinates to the lessee of the theatre to explain to him that he must close his doors against the wicked "Iconoclast." The lessee, hesitating, was carried before the Chief Constable himself, who, speaking with all the majesty of his office, told him that the lectures could not be allowed. On Saturday night (13th October) * Mr Bradlaugh's agent, Mr Cowan, called upon the lessee for the keys, but was informed that he had been ordered not to permit the meetings to be held. Poor lessee! between the upper and the nether millstone he got very little peace. Mr Cowan, after considerable discussion, took him, late at night though it was, to Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh had gone to bed, but got up at

* The lectures were announced for the following day.

the summons, and all three went to the Chief Constable's, but nothing was to be done there at that time of night. In the morning the lessee accepted Mr Bradlaugh's written indemnity against all consequence, and my father was permitted to lecture unmolested, although he and his friends were much diverted to find detectives, police, and magistrates amongst the audience.

A fortnight later Mr Bradlaugh was due in Glasgow, and on his way to Scotland made a little halt at Newcastle. For some weeks past a clergyman, the Rev. David King, sufficiently well known in certain circles, had been playing the braggart in the north of England. All, and nothing short of all, the "Infidels" were afraid of him; none dare meet him in debate—if he had modestly stopped at that, there would have been little harm done, but to his boasts he added gross slanders of Freethinkers, both living and dead, individually and in the mass. My father went up north at the right moment, for on Saturday, 27th October, this Mr D. King was announced to lecture at Bedlington on Secularists and their perversions; the Newcastle Freethinkers, who were highly indignant, asked Mr Bradlaugh to break his journey to Scotland in order to come and give the reverend slanderer a lesson, and this he agreed to do. "The news of Iconoclast's coming had spread like wildfire," said Elijah Copeland in a report he wrote at the time; * and since then I have heard from a Northumberland friend how swiftly the tidings spread from man to man, and from village to village, that Iconoclast was coming to teach David King a little truth and modesty. The excitement was so great that the Lecture Hall at Bedlington was hardly opened before it was full—but the hour came, and no Iconoclast. David King commenced his address—full as usual of boasts of himself and insults to Secularists. Time sped on lightning wings; every moment intensified the anxiety, every movement, every outside sound increased the excitement. To many Mr Bradlaugh was known only by fame, and if a fresh person came into the hall the question, "Is that he?" was eagerly whispered round the room, only to be answered by those better informed with a reluctant shake of the head. A little man sitting on the platform attracted some attention. "Could *that* be the redoubtable Iconoclast?" asked some of the anxious ones; no one seemed to know the stranger,

* *National Reformer.*

and at last the feeling grew so intense that some one put the question directly to the unknown man on the platform, and without surprise he received the obvious answer. The lecture was nearing its close, and as all danger of the threatened opposition seemed passing away the lecturer's language grew more and more unrestrained. When, hark! what was that? A noise outside of many feet, a loud determined knock, the door thrown open impetuously, letting in a flood of fresh cold air, and with it the almost-despaired-of Iconoclast, who was greeted with deafening cheers. When the real man came, no one had any doubt as to his identity—he was recognised at once by all. David King's tone changed directly, and when the time for discussion came Mr Bradlaugh gave the lesson he had come to teach, to the unbounded delight and satisfaction of all the Freethinkers present. After the discussion came the return drive of twelve or fourteen miles in the cold and the rain to Newcastle, which was reached at two in the morning. While my father snatched a couple of hours' sleep, some of his friends sat and watched in order to rouse him for the Scotch express, which passed through Newcastle about five o'clock. Arrived at Edinburgh, my father found he had twenty minutes to wait, so he thought he would get some breakfast, but "alas!" said he, "it was Sunday morning, and starvation takes precedence of damnation in the *unco guid* city. Instead of drinking hot coffee, I had to shiver in the cold, admiring the backs of the tumble-down-looking houses in the high "toon" for want of better occupation. I arrived in Glasgow just one hour before the time fixed for the morning lecture—dirty, weary, hungry, thirsty, and sleepy." *

After the evening lecture Mr Bradlaugh had to hurry from the platform of the Eclectic Hall to catch the train which steamed out of Glasgow at twenty minutes to nine, so that he might be in time for Monday morning's business in the city, having spent two nights out of bed, travelled about 900 miles, and spoken at Bedlington and three times in Glasgow in less than forty-eight hours.

Four weeks from the day of his Glasgow lectures,† my father was arrested at Huddersfield. Two accounts of this were given in the *National Reformer*, one from the pen of Mr Bradlaugh, and

* *National Reformer*, November 4 (1866).

† On November 25 (1866).

one from that of a gentleman who was with him the greater part of the time. It was a case of "the Devonport blunder" being repeated by "the Religious Party of Huddersfield."

The Philosophical Hall, which for some little time previously had been used as a theatre, had been duly taken for "three lectures by Iconoclast;" there was a written agreement, the deposit paid, and a harmonium taken by the Huddersfield Free-thought Society into the Hall. Placards announcing the subjects of the lectures ("Temperance," "Reform," and "The Twelve Apostles") and the name of the lecturer were posted more than a fortnight beforehand throughout the town and upon the hall itself. On Saturday, at the eleventh hour, the proprietor, Mr Morton Price, secretly urged by persons too cowardly to appear themselves—at least, so it was rumoured—resolved that the lectures should not take place, and on Sunday morning Mr Bradlaugh "found the doors of the building locked and barred, and the police authorities on the alert. I tried," he tells us, "to gain admittance, but the wooden barriers were far stronger than my shoulders, and after bruising myself more than the doors, and waiting in the rain for about forty minutes, while some sort of iron bar was vainly searched for, I returned very disconsolate to my lodgings. Several members of the Huddersfield Society begged me to lecture in Senior's schoolroom, but I positively refused; there were friends in from the country for miles round who could not be contained in so small a meeting-place. The Yorkshire energy was roused, and a dozen volunteers started to open the door; I followed, and came in time to twist a crowbar into curious shapes, and be arrested by the police and lodged in the station. At first I was ordered into a cell; my money, watch and chain, keys, toothpick, and other dangerous weapons being taken from me. As, however, since Devonport, where the lock-up was damp, I object to cells on principle, I gently argued the matter, and ultimately the presiding authority announced that I should be let out *if I could get a magistrate to become bail.* This was not very probable, and looked like being locked up for two whole days, but two good friends not only started to arrange with some local magistrate about bail, but actually succeeded. During the time they were absent I had, however, effected my own release from custody without any bail at all. . . . . When the charge was entered by Superintendent Hannan, who, I am bound to say,

behaved in a most gentleman-like and courteous manner, I again discussed the matter, and ultimately the stage-manager said he would find bail if I would agree not to lecture. This I indignantly refused. I came to lecture, and I meant to lecture; and after many *pour parlers*, I walked out of custody without any other condition than my word of honour to appear before the magistrates to answer the charge on the following Tuesday. The news spread like wildfire, and I had an enormous audience, crowding the theatre from floor to ceiling, the chiefs of the police honouring us with their presence."

People had come from far and near to hear him lecture—from Dewsbury, Bradford, Leeds, Halifax, Manchester, and elsewhere, and great was the dismay when it was found that the Hall doors were closed against them. When it was known that he would not lecture in the schoolroom, and he had determined to make an effort to force the doors, volunteers for the work immediately stepped forward; they begged him "to keep out of action" until the doors were down; but to look on whilst others got into trouble never came easy to my father. So he took a crowbar and helped with the rest, and the twisted iron was preserved in triumph by some Huddersfield friends until a few years ago. They attacked the pit and gallery door in Bull and Mouth Street, and their united exertions soon threw it open to the crowd impatiently waiting to enter. The Police Office was next door to the Philosophical Hall, so the police were able to watch the proceedings with little trouble to themselves. When they arrested Mr Bradlaugh, so great was the indignation of the crowd that they even threatened to rescue him by main force, and guards of police were hastily put at all weak places. It was, however, Mr Bradlaugh himself who relieved the fears of his captors. He sent a message to his friends, asking them to leave peacefully and without disorder, assuring them that he would be all right. In compliance with his request the people who thronged the hall quietly dispersed, only one person remaining behind to keep possession of the theatre. Messrs Armitage and Mitchell rushed off in a cab to find a magistrate liberal enough to become bail for the imprisoned Atheist, and during their absence—on what seemed an impossible errand—Mr Bradlaugh sent word from the police-station to the committee that he would lecture at half-past six. This message was received with the wildest enthusiasm, but since Mr Bradlaugh

was still in the hands of the police and it was then four o'clock, it seemed, on reflection, highly improbable. But the first messenger was rapidly followed by a second, bringing word that "Iconoclast" was free once more. On his appearance on the platform of the Philosophical Hall at the appointed time the enthusiasm and excitement were unbounded, and his lecture on "Reform" was said to have been "one of the most splendid and eloquent he had yet delivered."

On the following Tuesday Mr Bradlaugh had to appear before the Huddersfield magistrates. Though there were five upon the Bench—only two, G. Armitage, Esq., and S. W. Haigh, Esq.—heard the case. Naturally enough, the Court was densely crowded, and many were unable to obtain admission. Mr Nehemiah Learoyd prosecuted. This attorney was defined as "a gentleman according to Act of Parliament," though it does not appear that he had any other claim to the title. In the case against Mr Bradlaugh he conducted himself with such effrontery and coarseness as to make it more than ever evident that Acts of Parliament have their limitations. My father was charged with doing damage to the door of the Huddersfield Theatre to the amount of twenty-four shillings: after this charge was read another charge of committing a breach of the peace was brought forward. Mr Bradlaugh suggested that each charge should be gone into separately: Mr Learoyd would have them taken together, and the magistrates decided in his favour. The case for the prosecution was opened and witnesses called. Mr Bradlaugh raised an objection to the jurisdiction of the Court, and after some argument and some further examination of witnesses, the magistrates retired to consider the point. After an interval of ten minutes they returned, having decided in Mr Bradlaugh's favour that they had no jurisdiction. Mr Learoyd then, with unblushing effrontery, wished to proceed with the second charge—the breach of the peace; but he had elected at the outset to take both charges together, and by that he was compelled to abide. The decision of the magistrates was greeted with instant applause, which was of course rebuked by the Court. The case was reported at length by the *Huddersfield Examiner* and the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, and gained for Mr Bradlaugh many friends in Huddersfield and the surrounding districts. And thus for once was bigotry frustrated.

On the following Sunday Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing at New-

castle, and many people, women as well as men, came in distances of fifteen and twenty miles to hear him. One man told how he had come thirty-eight miles "to get a grip" of my father's hand. Two days after this he was at Northampton, where he found himself becoming quite "respectable," and, "to the horror of the saints and my own surprise," he said, he was permitted the use of the Mechanics' Institute for his discourses. A week or so later he was lecturing in the great Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on behalf of the widow and family of his late colleague, John Watts. He gave himself no rest in body or mind, nor did he seem to relax the strain for a moment. The old year closed, and 1867 opened with a course of lectures at the City Road Hall, at one of which, by the by, it is interesting to note that Mr Bradlaugh defended Mr Gladstone from an attack made upon his sincerity of purpose, "believing him to be the most able and honest statesman whom the people have on their side."

Notwithstanding all his lecturing, the great quantity of literary work he was then engaged upon, the Reform Demonstrations, and harassing private business, Mr Bradlaugh yet found time in the spring of 1867 to engage in a six nights' debate with the Rev. J. M'Cann, M.A., curate of St Paul's, Huddersfield. The discussion was arranged to take place in the theatre, or Philosophical Hall, which had been forcibly closed against the Freethinkers only a few months before. The preliminaries to the debate were a little ominous: in the first place Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to agree to the terms dictated by his religious antagonist (or his committee), otherwise there would have been no discussion; and above and beyond this the Rev. Mr M'Cann "refused to debate if the name Iconoclast be used, and therefore it will be Charles Bradlaugh who answers for the shortcomings of Iconoclast, despite the injury in business caused by the wide publicity recently given to the name and thus repeated." *

The debate arose out of some "Anti-Secularist lectures" which Mr M'Cann had been delivering in Huddersfield, presumably inspired thereto by the sensation caused by the theatre episode of the previous November. The subjects of these lectures were to be discussed for six nights, three hours each night, Mr Bradlaugh attacking and Mr M'Cann defending. Mr M'Cann, who was an

* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, March 1867.

Irishman, and who from the active part he was taking in the Literary and Scientific Society and other institutions of the town, was regarded as a "rising young man," rather disappointed many of the Freethinkers after the first two nights' discussion. Immovably confident in the ability of their own representative, they were anxious to see him meet someone worthy of his steel. Mr Bradlaugh's opinion, expressed at the conclusion of the six nights, was that Mr M'Cann was a fluent, ready speaker, honest and earnest, although no great debater.*

The year 1868 was a terribly busy one: the Irish question (of which I will speak later), the first Government prosecution of the *National Reformer*, and his first Parliamentary candidature for Northampton, kept my father constantly hard at work. During the year he lectured frequently in London, besides visiting Grimsby, Bedlington, Newcastle, Hull, West Bromwich, Birmingham, Kettering, Northampton, Huddersfield, Bradford, Sheffield, Ashton, Manchester, Bury, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Keighley, Sunderland, Plymouth, and other towns.

At Huddersfield he was always welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm, although some of the inhabitants still seemed determined to resist his visits. As the theatre was too small to accommodate all his auditors, the Huddersfield Committee took the circus for some addresses which he had arranged to deliver in the town in March. The Improvement Commissioners, however, eager to imitate the conduct of Mr Morton Price of a year and a half before, drew back from their agreement to let. Then a curious thing happened. When he was aware of the behaviour of the Commissioners, Mr Morton Price himself offered the Huddersfield Freethinkers the use of the theatre; and not only did he let it to them, but he gave a special advertisement of the meetings. The advertisement was so peculiarly and significantly worded that I reproduce it:

"Theatre Royal, Huddersfield.

"Mr Morton Price begs to inform the nobility, gentry, and general public of Huddersfield that, finding his efforts to preserve his theatre from Atheism and Profanity *so appreciative and remunerative*, he has let the said theatre for a series of lectures by Mr Bradlaugh, the 'Iconoclast,' on Sunday next, March 15th, 1868."

In connection with the Manchester lectures also an amusing

* No verbatim report of this discussion was ever published.

incident took place. It may be remembered that a man named William Murphy was about this time lecturing in different parts of England on behalf of the Protestant Church in Ireland, and his conduct had been so strange, and his language so inflammatory, that in the north he had been the cause of some very serious "No Popery" riots. In Manchester he was arrested, and his lectures practically prohibited. My father going to Manchester just after this prohibition, it occurred to certain good Christians that this might perhaps be turned to account against him. Consequently, when he arrived in Manchester on the Saturday night (September 5th) prior to his Sunday lectures, he found all kinds of rumours in circulation, friends even telling him that there were warrants out for his arrest. This was much exaggerated, and what really had happened was this: On the Friday, at the City Police Court, before the stipendiary magistrate, Mr Fowler, an application had been made by Mr Bennett, solicitor, for proceedings to be taken against Mr Charles Bradlaugh, then announced to deliver a series of lectures in the Free Trade Hall on Sunday. "The sworn information of a respectable householder, living in Boundary Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock," was forthcoming that the lectures could not take place "without giving rise to a breach of the peace." There was no contention that any overt acts of violence had ever been committed on account of these lectures; nevertheless, "the respectable householder"—whose name was afterwards stated to be Smith—thought they ought to be prohibited, "as in the case of Mr Murphy." Mr Fowler argued the cases were very different, and suggested that Mr Bennett should look up his law, and then, if he thought his position satisfactory, he could attend on the following morning with his witnesses. So much, indeed, Mr Bradlaugh had gathered from the London papers read on his journey northwards. Arrived at his journey's end, he was still in suspense as to what had happened that day, and the friends who met the train could not set his anxieties at rest. However, from an evening paper he learned that Mr Bennett had not found any further support in law for his application, which the magistrate told him must consequently fail. He said further:

"You say this case is similar to that of William Murphy, whose case was heard in this Court on Tuesday last. But it appears to me very different. We must be very careful indeed as magistrates not to interfere in any way with the freedom of discussion, and in no way by the

decision of Tuesday, as far as I can see, have we done so. In the case before us on Tuesday it was proved on oath that William Murphy was about to deliver a series of lectures, which he had already given in other towns, where, from his own conduct, and the threatening attitude he assumed by producing a revolver, and other acts, very serious riots had arisen, followed by great destruction of property and even danger to life; and from what was proved before us as to what had already taken place in this city since the announcement of these lectures, it appeared there was every probability of the same thing occurring here. To prevent this—exercising the power which as magistrates, in my opinion, we undoubtedly have—we called upon the defendant, William Murphy, to enter upon his recognisances for his good behaviour; you mark the words, 'good behaviour,' Mr Bennett. That, of course, includes keeping the peace; and under similar circumstances to those proved before us, we should certainly do the same whether the defendant was Roman Catholic, Protestant, or of any other denomination. Now, I think you have entirely failed to show in the application you made yesterday that any such result has ensued, or is likely to ensue, from the lectures about to be given by the person against whom you apply. Therefore the application is refused."

The upshot of this application at the Police Court was a wide advertisement of the lectures, an intense excitement, and anxiety to hear the lecturer. The *Saturday Review*, true to the feelings of bitter animosity which it cherished against Mr Bradlaugh, thought that

"it might perhaps be plausibly argued that the same reasons which weighed with them [the magistrates] when they refused to restrain Mr Iconoclast Bradlaugh from attacking and insulting all religions, might also have influenced them when they were asked to restrain Murphy from insulting one form of the Christian faith."

The *Saturday Review* elsewhere spoke of Manchester as having been "the theatre of riots" in consequence of Murphy's behaviour and of the "savage brutality" exhibited. No sort of disturbance could be alleged as resulting from Mr Bradlaugh's lectures, but anything was "plausible" to the *Saturday Review* as against him.

Of course this rushing about from city to city, and several hours' speaking in crowded halls sandwiched in between the long railway journeys, meant a great physical strain.

In February my father tells how he had travelled on the previous Saturday in a tremendous storm to Morpeth for Bedlington, arriving at Morpeth (five or six miles from Bedlington) at the very hour at which he ought to have been on the platform. "A

rapid wash while horses were being got ready; no time for tea, and off we sped to our destination, where we found the little hall crowded with an eager and appreciative audience, some of whom had walked many miles to be present." A midnight return drive with storm most furiously raging, and then to Newcastle, where three lectures were delivered on the Sunday. "In forty-eight hours I travelled nearly 630 miles, delivered four lectures, and came back to that daily toil for that life-subsistence which is so hard to win. I need hardly add that the mere travelling expenses on such a journey swallow up all profit derivable from the lectures." The Glasgow and Edinburgh lectures in the beginning of August meant "one thousand miles and four lectures in two days and three nights, and back to business by ten on Monday." At the end of August another visit to Newcastle meant "another six hundred miles and three lectures in one day and a half and two nights, following upon no less than three open-air addresses at Northampton."

In the following year my father continued to do a great deal of public speaking. His home troubles were growing greater, and his business life in the city was daily becoming more difficult, but this seemed only to make him toil the harder in that cause of religious and political progress which lay so near his heart. At the new Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, which had just been leased in the interests of the Freethought party, Mr Bradlaugh delivered in the year upwards of forty lectures, for none of which he received a single penny, devoting the whole of the proceeds towards paying the debt upon the building. He did not allow any one month to pass without giving one or more Sundays to the New Hall. He lectured several times also at the hall in Cleveland Street; and in the latter part of the year, for the most part, he visited thirty or more provincial towns, at many of which he gave three discourses on the Sunday. In 1869 also Mr Bradlaugh took part in an examination into alleged spiritualistic phenomena held by the London Dialectical Society, but without any satisfactory results. Undoubtedly the chief event of the year for him was his final defeat of the Government in their prosecution of the *National Reformer*, and through this the repeal of the odious Security laws. He was involved in another law-suit, which, as we shall see later, led to the amending of the laws relating to evidence.

Matters went rather more smoothly with my father's provincial

lecturing this year; no town seemed to be sufficiently encouraged by the course of affairs in Devonport and Huddersfield to follow their example very closely. But still he met with some rebuff. For instance, when he was at Blyth on April 3rd, the innkeepers there were all so pious that none would give him food or shelter. April 3rd was a Saturday, not a Sunday, so there was not even the lame excuse of keeping the Sabbath Day holy by refusing to harbour an Atheist. The people of Blyth who undertook to provide for the creature comforts of the inhabitants and visitors must have been bigoted to the last degree, for in the week before Mr Bradlaugh's visit, a coffee-house keeper had refused to supply with tea some persons who were rash enough to admit that they had attended Mrs Law's lectures. Happily, such churlish bigotry was by no means universal, for the Blyth Lecture Hall was so crowded when Mr Bradlaugh arrived that he had to gain admittance through a back window. He afterwards related how "one hearty fellow and two or three Unitarians volunteered to give me a night's shelter, but I was unaware of this until I had made my arrangements for a midnight walk in the dark to Bedlington under escort of half a dozen stalwart fellows." This is the occasion to which Mr Thomas Burt referred in his article in the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review* for July 1891. Mr Burt there says that all the ordinary halls and schoolrooms were refused to Mr Bradlaugh, but that a gentleman, Mr Richard Fynes, who had recently purchased a chapel, and was a true lover of free speech, granted the use of his building to the Bedlington Secular Society. Mr Burt, who had gone from curiosity to hear Mr Bradlaugh, at the close of the meeting asked him and some friends home to supper. His people were rather horror-stricken, but, with true courtesy, allowed nothing of it to appear to their guest, and the supper passed off quite smoothly, Mr Bradlaugh making himself very agreeable. It is rather curious that Mr Burt had no idea how *àpropos* his hospitality was. It was not until after he had given his invitation that he learned that in all Blyth there was no place of refreshment that would open its doors to the Atheist.

But unfortunately it was not only to Mr Bradlaugh himself that violence was used or threatened: those who attended his lectures or who were suspected of sympathising with his opinions sometimes ran considerable risk. For instance, he had been

lecturing at Portsmouth on Monday, May 10th, on the Irish Church and the Land Question, and his lecture created considerable excitement in the town. Shortly afterwards a "converted clown" was holding forth on Portsea Common, and a man suspected to be in sympathy with Mr Bradlaugh stayed to listen. The converted one frequently addressed the new-comer as an "unhappy infidel animal," and so worked upon his pious listeners that in the end they turned upon the "infidel," who was "hissed, hooted, kicked, cuffed, and knocked about so unmercifully that he sought protection" in flight. The whole brutal mob pursued and overtook him, "his clothes were almost torn from him, and but for the assistance of several passers-by—some of whom also received rough treatment—he would probably have been killed." *

True, everywhere he went my father met with hate and scorn; yet everywhere he went he also met with a trust and love such as falls to the lot of few men to know. The hate and scorn passed over him, scarce leaving a trace, but the love and trust went deep into his heart, making up, as he said, for "many disappointments." At Keighley "two veterans, one eighty and one seventy-three, walked eleven miles to hear me lecture; and at Shipley another greeted me, seventy-six years old, asking for one more grip of the hand before he died."† On Mr Bradlaugh's return journey from Yorkshire, at every station between Leeds and Keighley men and women came to bid him good-bye; from a dozen districts round they came, "old faces and young ones, men, women, and smiling girls," and he was moved to the utmost depths of his nature to see how their love for him grew with his every visit.

Summer or winter, fair weather or foul, people would come many and many a mile to hear him speak. At Over Darwen, where he had some fine meetings that October, he found that some of the poor folk had come in from a distance of "twenty-three miles; many had come ten to sixteen miles, some walking steadily over the 'tops' through the mist and rain, and having to leave home as early as six in the morning in order to get to us; one

* *West Sussex Gazette*, June 24th. And *these* are the people who affect to believe in Mr Bradlaugh's violence and coarseness! "Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

† C. Bradlaugh, in *National Reformer*, July 1869.

sturdy old man declaring that he never missed when I was within twenty-five miles of his home." *

I should like also to note here the open-mindedness shown about this time by a Catholic priest at Seghill. Mr Bradlaugh was to lecture in the colliery schoolroom on "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle," but almost at the last moment the authorities would have none of such a wicked man. Upon hearing this a Catholic priest named Father O'Dyer allowed the lecture to take place in his chapel at Annitsford, and he himself took the chair. Mr Bradlaugh, of course, greatly appreciated this unlooked-for kindness on the part of Father O'Dyer, though in his surprise at such unwonted conduct he might humorously comment "the age of miracles has recommenced."

In December Mr Bradlaugh was in Lancashire—one Saturday at Middleton, the next day at Bury, where considerable excitement had been created by the burning of the *National Reformer* in the Bury Reform Club by one of the members; on Monday at Accrington, where the lecture was followed by a three hours' drive in the night across country, over bad and slippery roads, to Preston to catch the London train. At Preston the station was locked up, but Mr Bradlaugh managed to get inside the porters' room, where there was happily a fire, by which he dozed until the train was due. "Then six hours' rail in the frosty night, and back to city work for Tuesday morning. Who will buy our bishopric?" he asked. But to this there was no reply.

---

* Of these Darwen lectures all the Preston papers gave long reports. The Conservative *Preston Herald* thought that "the burning words of eulogium [on Mr Gladstone] that fell from the lips of the clever advocate" laid Mr Bradlaugh "open to the suspicion of having accepted a retainer and a brief from the astute statesman"! About 1200 persons attended each lecture, and the "quiet village of Darwen was rendered as throng as a fair" by the influx of people from so many of the surrounding villages.

CHAPTER XXV.

IRELAND.

I AM now come to a point in my father's history at which I must confess my utter inability to give anything like a just account of his work. All I can do—in spite of great time and labour almost fruitlessly spent in following up the slenderest clues—is to relate a few facts which must not be taken as a complete story, but merely as indicating others of greater importance. The reason for my ignorance will be found in Mr Bradlaugh's own words written in 1873 :—

"My sympathy with Ireland and open advocacy of justice for the Irish nearly brought me into serious trouble. Some who were afterwards indicted as the chiefs of the so-called Fenian movement came to me for advice. So much I see others have written, and the rest of this portion of my autobiography I may write some day. At present there are men not out of danger whom careless words might imperil, and as regards myself I shall not be guilty of the folly of printing language which a Government might use against me." *

That "some day" of which he wrote never came; and to-day we know little more of what help he gave to the chiefs of the "so-called Fenian movement" than we did in 1873. There is, however, one man still living—perhaps there are two, but of the second I am not quite sure—who could if he chose throw considerable light upon this period; but this person I have been unable to reach. From the time when, by sending the 7th Dragoon Guards to Ireland, the English Government was kind enough to afford the newly enlisted Private Bradlaugh an opportunity of studying that unfortunate country from within, and by sending him on duty at evictions to bring him face to face with the suffering her wretched

* *Autobiography.*

peasantry had to endure—from that time (in the early fifties) until his death, English misgovernment of Ireland and the condition of the Irish people occupied a very prominent place in his thoughts. Between 1866 and 1868, while Ireland was in a state of agitation and insurrection, he frequently brought the subject of her grievances before his English audiences: articles on the Irish land question and the English in Ireland appeared in the *National Reformer*, and he himself took the Irish question as a frequent theme for his lectures. "Englishmen," he would say, "have long been eloquent on the wrongs of Poland and other down-trodden nations, insisting on their right to govern themselves; but they have been singularly unmindful of their Irish brethren. Advocacy of the claims of Poland showed a love of liberty and freedom. Advocacy for Ireland spelled treason. The three great curses of Ireland were her beggars, her bogs, and her barracks. The reclaiming of the millions of acres of bogland, now waste, with proper security for tenants, would diminish the beggars; and as bogs and beggars decreased, contentment would increase, and Government would be deprived of all excuse for the retention of an armed force." Talking in this strain, he would strive to win English sympathy for Ireland. At meeting after meeting he pointed out the evils of our Irish legislation, and won the thanks of Irishmen for his "outspoken language."

The Fenian Brotherhood, was, as we know, a secret association, founded and framed by James Stephens, for the establishment of an Irish Republic. That the association was a secret one was the fault of the English Government, since it forbade all open and orderly meetings; and the more open agitation was suppressed, the stronger grew the Fenian movement. Some of the Fenian leaders, amongst whom were Colonel Kelly and General Cluseret, came to Mr Bradlaugh for legal advice; and one of the results of the many consultations held at Sunderland Villa was the framing of the following proclamation, which was published in the *Times* for March 8th, 1867, at the end of two or three columns of excited accounts of the Fenian rising in Ireland:—

"I. R.—Proclamation!—The Irish People to the World.

"We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands, and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of

the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living and the political rights denied to them at home; while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers. Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful. To-day, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom. All men are born with equal rights, and in associating together to protect one another and share public burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it. We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government, we aim at founding a republic, based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour. The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England; our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields—against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our blood and theirs. Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom. *Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic.*"

"THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT."

This proclamation was printed by Colonel Kelly,* who obtained possession of some printing works at Islington, and in one night

* Headingley, p. 105.

set up this famous manifesto. Mr J. M. Davidson says that the document was drawn by Mr Bradlaugh's hand.* Mr Adolphe S. Headingley † says that "the informers Massey and Corydon in their evidence insist that Bradlaugh himself drew up the proclamation." In spite of a very considerable search I have not yet been able to find the words used by Massey or Corydon; but on this point, at least, I am able to quote the highest authority—my father himself. I was talking to him in his study one day, and in the course of our conversation he pulled down a thick green volume—an Irish history—and opening it, put his finger upon this proclamation. "They say I wrote that," he said with a smile. "And did you?" I asked. He then told me that the draft of the proclamation, as it left his study after being approved, *was* in his handwriting; but that when he saw it in print he found that it had been altered after leaving his hands. Unfortunately, I did not go over it with him to ask where it had been altered; but words written by him in January 1868 throw a little light on the matter. He then said:

"I am against the present establishment of a republic in Ireland, because, although I regard republicanism as the best form of government possible, I nevertheless think that the people of England and of Ireland are yet too much wanting in true dignity and independence, and too ignorant of their political rights and duties, to at present make good republicans. We are growing gradually towards the point of republican government; but it is not, I think, the question of to-day. A forcible separation of Ireland from England would not unnaturally be resisted by the latter to her last drop of blood and treasure; and I do not believe that the Irish party are either strong enough or sufficiently united to give even a colour of probability to the supposition of a successful revolution." ‡

Again, "I do not believe in an enduring revolution to be effected by revolvers; . . . . I do not believe in a lasting republic to be formed by pike aid." ‡

Hence from Mr Bradlaugh's own words, written in January 1868, it will be seen that he could not possibly have joined in the proclamation of a force-established republic in March 1867.

---

* *Weekly Dispatch*, November 16, 1879. † Headingley, p. 104.
‡ Pamphlet on the Irish Question.

Throughout the year (1867) the country was in a very disturbed state. The Fenians were numerous, but inefficiently organised; they made isolated attacks on police barracks in Ireland, and attempted to seize Chester Castle, which contained a considerable store of arms. In September Kelly and Deasy were arrested at Manchester, and on the 18th of that month they were rescued while being moved with a number of other prisoners in the police van from the police court to the city jail. This rescue was destined to cost a number of lives, commencing with that of poor Sergeant Brett, whose death was followed, on the 23rd of November, by the execution of the three patriots, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien. For several months from the time of the Manchester rescue our house was watched, back and front, night and day, and two policemen in uniform were stationed at Park Railway Station to scrutinise all the passengers who alighted there. I hardly know in what light my father regarded this surveillance, but I do not think he can have taken it very much to heart; we children looked upon it sometimes as a great distinction and sometimes as a capital joke, and we must to some extent have reflected the mood of our elders—not that I mean that Mr Bradlaugh was silly enough to regard this unremitting attention on the part of the police as a "distinction," but that we could not so have felt it had he been even a little troubled by it.

Just before the trial of the Manchester Martyrs, Mr Bradlaugh wrote a short but most eloquent plea for Ireland. He concluded it by urgently entreating:

"Before it be too late, before more blood shall stain the pages of our present history, before we exasperate and arouse bitter animosities, let us try and do justice to our sister land. Abolish once and for all the land laws, which in their iniquitous operation have ruined her peasantry. Sweep away the leech-like Church which has sucked her vitality, and has given her back no word even of comfort in her degradation. Turn her barracks into flax mills, encourage a spirit of independence in her citizens, restore to her people the protection of the law so that they may speak without fear of arrest, and beg them to plainly and boldly state their grievances. Let a Commission of the best and wisest amongst Irishmen, with some of our highest English judges added, sit solemnly to hear all complaints, and let us honestly legislate, not for the punishment of the discontented, but to remove the causes

of the discontent. It is not the Fenians who have depopulated Ireland's strength and increased her misery. It is not the Fenians who have evicted tenants by the score. It is not the Fenians who have checked cultivation. Those who have caused the wrong at least should frame the remedy." *

Then came November and the sentence of death upon the four men who had taken part in the rescue of Deasy and Kelly at Manchester. Despite the bitter weather that followed, thousands of people assembled at Clerkenwell Green to memorialize the Government to pardon the condemned men. Mr Bradlaugh spoke at the meetings held there, and at Cambridge Hall, Newman Street. But such meetings were of no avail. Englishmen were panic-stricken, and sought to protect their own lives by taking other people's. Eloquence, justice, right are pointless weapons when used to combat blind fear.

Hard upon the "Manchester Sacrifice"—December 13th—followed the Clerkenwell explosion, by which four persons were killed and about forty men, women, and children were injured, in a mad attempt to blow up Clerkenwell Prison in order to rescue Burke and Casey, who were then on their trial.

This dastardly crime was a shock to all true friends of Ireland, just as the crime of the Phœnix Park murders was fourteen years later. Mr Bradlaugh wrote in the *National Reformer* a most earnest and pathetic denunciation of the outrage. He wrote it with the consciousness that he might lose many friends by the declaration that he had been "and even yet am favourable to the Irish Cause, which will be regarded by a large majority as most intimately connected with this fearfully mad crime." The Committee of the Irish Republican Brotherhood also, I believe, hastened to protest against and repudiate the outrage.

In the same issue of his paper, Mr Bradlaugh had an article on the Irish Crisis, in which he laid stress upon his opinion that "it is utterly impossible to hope for improvement in the general condition of Ireland until the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland are completely altered." In January 1868 he published an essay on "the Irish Question," which he afterwards issued as a

* *National Reformer*, October 20.

pamphlet.* In this he dealt with four methods which had been put forward as giving a "fair prospect of solution for the Irish difficulty." These were (1) Separation of Ireland from England: the people deciding their own form of government by vote; (2) "Stamping out" the rebellious spirit by force; (3) A Commission of Inquiry into Irish grievances having extensive powers of amnesty, to act immediately, and to be followed by the redressal of all *bona fide* grievances; (4) Political enfranchisement of Ireland, or a separate legislature. The first two methods, which he discussed at some length, he rejected as "impracticable and objectionable"; the third course he favoured strongly; and the main difficulty to the fourth seems to have been the existing suffrage. A separate legislature, he observed, had been advocated by "some very thoughtful writers, some able politicians, and some men of extraordinary genius." He wound up his essay with an appeal—an appeal to the Government and an appeal to the Irish Republican party. To both he pleaded for "forbearance, for mercy, for humanity." The Irish Republican party he specially and in most eloquent language entreated to "repress all violence—to check all physical vengeance."

Ireland was now more than ever the subject of Mr Bradlaugh's advocacy, and in connection with it there occurred on the 17th of January (1868) a rather curious incident. A gentleman—perhaps I ought not to mention his name—who was a correspondent and friend of my father's, belonged to a Quaker family, and was at the period of which I write a member of the Society of Friends, although he subsequently resigned his membership. He belonged also to a discussion society connected with the Friends' Institute, Bishopsgate Street. A debate was arranged upon the Irish question, and Mr ———, knowing how interested Mr Bradlaugh was in this subject, wrote inviting him to come to the meeting. This friend

* When he republished this as a pamphlet it was read by Mr Gladstone, who wrote to him the following autograph letter:—

"11 Carlton Terrace,
July 17, 1868.

"Dear Sir,—I have read your pamphlet with much interest, and with many important parts of it I cordially agree.—I remain, Dear Sir, yours very faithfully and obediently, W. E. Gladstone.

"Mr C. Bradlaugh."

This letter is still in my possession.

writing to me says: "He did come, and by a curious coincidence I was elected to the chair. Your father spoke, and quite delighted the Quakers with his earnestness and eloquence. They did not, however, know who the stranger was, but they pressed him to attend the adjourned meeting; he said he would, and come fortified with facts and statistics." My father was extremely gratified by the courtesy shown him, and the permission given him as a stranger to speak for double the usual time. At the same time he felt very awkward at receiving the cheers, congratulations, and special compliments, because he feared that they would hardly have been so freely accorded if his "real name and wicked character had been generally known there." His fears were fully justified, as Mr ———'s letter to me shows. He goes on to say:

"After the meeting was over and your father had shaken hands with me and gone, the members crowded round me to inquire who the eloquent visitor was. When they found it was the, at that time, notorious Iconoclast, you may imagine their feelings were of a mixed sort. And I got into disgrace for introducing him. That I did not mind, and I secretly enjoyed their confusion. However, the result was that the Secretary of the Society was ordered to write to your father and tell him he was not required to attend again."

And Mr Bradlaugh actually did receive a letter officially inviting him *not* to attend their next meeting on the Irish question.

In February the formation of an "Ireland Society" was announced in the *National Reformer*. This was an effort to bring Englishmen together with the aim of forming "a sounder public opinion" on Irish matters, but I doubt whether it met with the success the idea deserved. It had specially for its objects (1) The abolition of the Irish State Church; (2) A harmonious settlement of the land question; (3) Education for the poor in Ireland; (4) Atonement for English oppression by encouraging Irish Industries. At Leeds, at Sheffield, at Newcastle, Mr Bradlaugh spoke to his audiences on the subject of Ireland until they were moved to tears by his pictures of the wretched condition of the unhappy Irish people. At Newcastle, a warm-hearted Irish Catholic stepped upon the platform and gave his earnest thanks "to the orator" for expressing the sentiments held by all true Irishmen,* and the audience from end to

* *National Reformer*, Feb. 16, 1868.

end rose cheering and waving their hats. At Ashton-under-Lyne in April he spoke to an audience of 5000 persons, and reminded them that the Irish question might equally be called the English question, as it affected England as well as Ireland. Previous to this lecture there were rumours of violence, and threats "against life and limb," and the town was in a state of extreme excitement, a strong police force were mustered, and one magistrate attended the meeting with the Riot Act ready in his pocket! About a score or so of Orangemen managed to get into the hall and created considerable disorder at the outset, but they reckoned without chairman or speaker. The chairman, J. M. Balieff, Esq., J.P., despite the outcry raised against Mr Bradlaugh on account of his views on religion, had yet the moral courage to support him in his political opinions. The Orangemen opened up with a storm of hisses and groans, which was responded to by the friends of Ireland with excited cheering. This went on for some minutes, but was quickly quieted when the chairman resolutely stated that if it were necessary he should stay there all night, for he was quite determined that Mr Bradlaugh should state his views. At the conclusion of the lecture Mr Balieff publicly rebuked the bigotry which, unable to answer Mr Bradlaugh's political advocacy, assailed him for his speculative opinions. Amongst other places, my father went to Huddersfield to speak on the Irish question. My sister and I were in Huddersfield at the time staying with some friends, and we, of course went to the lecture, which was held in the theatre on Saturday, the 25th of April. This is the first lecture of my father's that I distinctly remember. I had been present at very many before, but of those I have only the vaguest recollections. The one at Huddersfield stands out as a complete picture in my memory. A stormy day, followed by a stormy night with strong wind and rain, had not prevented the earnest Yorkshire folks from coming to hear "the lad" (as they so often called him), and the theatre was full of eager, sympathetic faces when we went upon the platform. Mr Woodhead took the chair, and we, my sister and I, sat a little to the back of the stage, where I remember we were much troubled by the cold wind blowing round the "wings." So vivid is the memory that it seems almost as though I could recall the very words my father uttered, and the tones of his voice—now earnest, now impassioned, at one time severely rebuking, at another ardently pleading, or

gravely narrating. Or there was some joke or amusing anecdote, and the audience—who a moment before had been brushing away their tears openly or surreptitiously, each according to his temperament —now with one consent burst into hearty laughter. There was one old man in the front row, who with ear-trumpet to ear remained eagerly bent forward throughout the whole lecture, so unwilling was he to lose a single word. I was just ten years old then, and it seemed a revelation to me; for the first time I felt and realised something of my father's power over men.

In spite of fears entertained for his safety as a suspected man entering a disturbed country during the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act, on the 18th of March Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in Dublin under the auspices of the Irish Reform League. It was St Patrick's day, and "an enthusiastic barrister" whom he knew drove him about in his carriage. He wrote home that he heard the band play "'God save the Queen,' and the populace acknowledged it with a mixed sort of hiss and groan, which I believe is called 'keening.'" The lecture was delivered at the Mechanics' Institute, the hall was crammed to its utmost capacity, and lengthy reports of the speech appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* and *Dublin Evening Post.* At the conclusion an address was presented to Mr Bradlaugh as some testimony of Irish appreciation of his "disinterested and sincere devotion to our country's cause." The address reads: "We can but offer you our best thanks and warmest admiration, and tender you the unaffected and sincere love of warm Irish hearts, thus proving that Irishmen are never insensible to kindness," etc. By the light of later events, what bitter irony all this seems! The "sincere love of warm Irish hearts" looked much more like hate and malice in the years of Mr Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle. However, it was doubtless honest at the moment, and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed amongst the Dublin audience when the address was formally read and presented. The proceedings were orderly and unanimous throughout; nevertheless when the meeting separated they found the front of the building occupied by a detachment of police numbering about a hundred men; inspectors in attendance took the names and addresses of those who had taken any prominent part in the business of the evening; while the rank and file scrutinised the faces of the audience. The Dublin correspondent of an Irish Catholic paper published in London indulged in a

tirade of abuse against Mr Bradlaugh, whom he described as "the hired agent of the English Reform League, the Atheist Bradlaugh;" but he only aroused a host of defenders, whose defence, since he was unable to answer, he affected to despise.

When the turn of Elections in 1868 brought Mr Gladstone into power, Mr Bradlaugh applied at the Treasury for the withdrawal of the warrant out against General Cluseret for his arrest on the charge of treason-felony, but this clemency was refused.* With the subsidence of the Fenian agitation and the relief anticipated by the Disestablishment of the Irish Church there was less and less immediate need to Ireland for Mr Bradlaugh's activity, and when 1870 ushered in the Franco-Prussian War, his energies were turned for the time in another and more instantly pressing direction.

* Headingley, p. 107.

CHAPTER XXVI

NORTHAMPTON, 1868.

THERE is, I think, not the least doubt that very early in my father's life he began to nurse dreams of one day playing his part in the legislature of his country, and indeed it is currently reported in Northampton that as early as 1859 he spoke to some friends there of his wish to represent that borough in Parliament. As I have no exact evidence that Mr Bradlaugh went to the town before that year, I think the report puts the date a little too early, but in any case I do not find that the idea took any definite shape in his mind until about the end of 1865 or early in the following year. In 1867 it is clear that the possibility of his candidature was realised even by those outside the circle of his personal friends, for in the spring of that year we find a sarcastic prognosis of the possible results of the extended franchise in a West of England paper, in which the writer says: "Mr Bradlaugh would perhaps take the Government of India from the hands of Sir Stafford Northcote, his intelligence being not less, and his catholicity in religious matters making him a more acceptable ruler to the 'mild' but shrewd Hindoo." In place of the Government of India Mr Bradlaugh was destined to take other things of not quite so pleasant a nature from the hands of Sir Stafford Northcote, although it is rather curious that the *Western Times* should have selected in jest an appointment which would have afforded him so much scope for good and useful work.

Some time before anything definite had been said as to my father's candidature at the forthcoming elections in 1868, it was regarded as so much of a certainty that people began spontaneously to subscribe towards his election expenses. In June he notified his friends through the *National Reformer* that he would shortly announce the name of the borough to which he proposed to offer himself, and at the same time he would issue his address. This

was done within the next few days, in the midst of the burden and anxiety of the Government prosecution of the *Reformer*.

My father was well known in Northampton. Since he went there to lecture on the invitation of Mr Gurney and Mr Shipman, he had, as we have seen, many times visited the town, and his opinions on political, social, and religious questions were thoroughly well understood. As his address forms a sort of landmark of Mr Bradlaugh's views on many of these important subjects, some of which are still hotly discussed, and most of which still await a satisfactory solution, I give it exactly as he issued it.

"*To the present and future electors of the borough of Northampton:*

"In seeking your suffrages for the new Parliament, I am encouraged by the very warm feeling exhibited in my favour by so many of the inhabitants of your borough, and by the consciousness that my own efforts may have helped in some slight degree to hasten the assembly of a Parliament elected by a more widely extended franchise than was deemed possible two years ago.

"If you should honour me by electing me as one of your representatives, I shall give an independent support in the new Parliament to that party of which Mr Gladstone will probably be chosen leader; that is to say, I shall support it as far as its policy and action prove consistent with the endeavour to attain the following objects, which I hold to be essential to the progress of the nation:—

"1. A system of compulsory National Education, by which the State shall secure to each child the opportunity of acquiring at least the rudiments of a sound English education preparatory to the commencement of the mere struggle for bread.

"2. A change in our land laws, commencing with the abolition of the laws of primogeniture and entail; diminishing the enormous legal expenses attending the transfer of land, and giving greater security to the actual cultivation of the soil for improvements made upon it.

"3. A thorough change in our extravagant system of national expenditure, so that our public departments may cease to be refuges for destitute members of so-called noble families.

"4. Such a change in the present system of taxation that for the future the greater pressure of imperial taxes may bear upon those who hold previously accumulated wealth and large tracts of devised land, and not so much upon those who increase the wealth of the nation by their daily labour.

"5. An improvement of the enactments relating to capital and labour, so that employer and employed may stand equal before the law, the establishment of conciliation courts for the settlement of trade disputes, and the abolition of the jurisdiction in these matters of the unpaid magistracy.

"6. A complete separation of the Church from the State, including in this the removal of the Bishops from the position they at present occupy as legislators in the House of Lords.

"7. A provision by which minorities may be fairly represented in the legislative chambers.

"8. The abolition of all disabilities and disqualifications consequent upon the holding or rejection of any particular speculative opinion.

"9. A change in the practice of creating new peerages; limiting the new creations to life peerages, and these only to be given as rewards for great national services; peers habitually absent from Parliament to be deprived of all legislative privileges, and the right of voting by proxy in any case to be abolished.

"10. The abolition as a governing class of the old Whig party, which has long since ceased to play any useful part in our public policy. Toryism represents obstructiveness to Radical progress, but it represents open hostility. Whiggism is hypocritical; while professing to be liberal, it never initiates a good measure or hinders a bad one. I am in favour of the establishment of a National party which shall destroy the system of government by aristocratic families, and give the members of the community born poorest fair play in their endeavour to become statesmen and leaders, if they have genius and honesty enough to entitle them to a foremost place.

"In order that my competitors shall not have the right to object that I unfairly put them to the expense of a contest, I am willing to attend a meeting of the inhabitants of your borough, at which Mr Gilpin and Lord Henley shall be present, and to be governed by the decision voted at such a meeting as to whether or not I persist in my candidature.

"In asking your support I pledge myself, in the event of a contest, to fight through to the last moment of the Poll a fair and honest fight. It would give me special pleasure to be returned as the colleague of Mr Gilpin, whom I believe to be a thoroughly honest and earnest representative; and if you elect me I shall do my best in the House of Commons for the general enfranchisement and elevation of the people of the United Kingdom. CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

"Sunderland Villa, Northumberland Park, Tottenham."

In the above address as it appears in the pages of the *National Reformer* for July 5, paragraphs 7 and 9 are lightly struck through in pencil by my father's hand, but whether these pencil marks have any significance I am not prepared to say. His ideas for a reform of the House of Lords certainly went very much farther, in later years at least, than those indicated in the ninth paragraph. He believed in a single Legislative Chamber and

considered two unnecessary, but as a rule he disliked any sudden abolition of old-established customs, and therefore in advocating reforms of the House of Lords, he put forward such as would lead gradually and naturally to its discontinuance as a House of hereditary legislators.

This address was read in Northampton to a large audience on the last Sunday in June. Two days later, at a public meeting of about four thousand persons held in the Market Square, a vote was taken as to Mr Bradlaugh's candidature, and only one hand was lifted against it.

The issue of this address and the subsequent public meeting produced a considerable flutter in the political dovecots of Northampton. A great outcry was raised at Mr Bradlaugh's unheard-of audacity in putting himself forward without receiving the usual requisition, but, as he calmly explained at a meeting in the Northampton theatre a few weeks later, he had for two years intended to become a candidate for Parliament, and had determined to offer himself to any body of men wherever he thought he had a fair chance of success. He believed Northampton was that place, and in putting himself forward without formal invitation he did not think he had imperilled either his own dignity or that of the electors. The *Northampton Mercury*, * the local Whig paper, affected the utmost scorn for his candidature, saying that he had "no more chance of being elected member for Northampton than he has of being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury." "*Nous verrons*" was Mr Bradlaugh's only comment upon this declaration, which was afterwards taken up and repeated by different papers as a sort of *bon mot.*

But the disdain of the Northampton Whigs was well balanced by the enthusiasm of the Northampton working-men. They threw themselves into the work of the election contest, from the very outset, with the utmost zeal and ardour; they delivered the address by hand at every house in Northampton—and the work was all done gratuitously. And so with all the elections in which my father took part: he had neither paid agents nor paid canvassers; he had no paid speakers (beyond, in some cases, out-of-pocket expenses) and few paid clerks; all such work was freely and eagerly volunteered. Nor were the women less ardent than

* July 4th.

the men. They soon decided upon his election colours, and at the conclusion of a meeting held by him in the theatre in the middle of July, they presented him with a rosette made of mauve, white, and green ribbons, a combination unique amongst election colours, afterwards generally identified with Mr Bradlaugh and loved for his sake. Some of these same rosettes fashioned and worn at this election in 1868 were cast into the grave at Brookwood in 1891, and some others, which their owners had carefully treasured for six-and-twenty years, were worn for the last time on the 25th June 1894, when the statue of Mr Bradlaugh was unveiled in the town whose name will be for ever associated with his own.

Amongst those who came to speak for him the first place must be given to George Odger, who was himself trying to win a seat at Chelsea. Besides Mr Odger there were the Rev. J. K. Applebee, Austin Holyoake, R. A. Cooper, E. Truelove, C. Watts, and others, and everywhere the meetings were large and enthusiastic. Poor men—freethinkers and radicals—throughout the country vied to help in this election; but men in Edinburgh and men in Lancashire could neither vote nor canvass, so they resolved to give aid in money. Long and costly was the candidature; the elections did not come off until November, and thus the campaign continued over five months. Some of the northern towns endeavoured to raise a regular monthly subscription, some a weekly one, and soon long lists appeared in the columns of the *National Reformer*, long lists made up mostly of small sums, of threepences or sixpences, or shillings; sums of £1 and over were rare, and seldom indeed was there such a heavy donation as £10, Mr Bradlaugh's supporters being, with scarcely an exception, poor working men. At the end of August John Stuart Mill drew upon himself a hailstorm of abuse by sending £10 to Mr Austin Holyoake, secretary of the Election Fund, with the following letter:—

"Avignon, August 28th, 1868.

"Dear Sir,—I enclose a subscription of £10 to the fund for defraying the expenses of Mr Bradlaugh's election to the House of Commons. I do so in the confidence that Mr Bradlaugh would not contest any place where by so doing he would risk the return of a Tory in the room of a supporter of Mr Gladstone, and of the disendowment of the Irish Church.—I am, dear Sir, yours very faithfully, J. S. Mill.

"Austin Holyoake, Esq."

Much capital was made out of the assertion that Mr Bradlaugh was trying to divide the Liberal vote at Northampton, and so let in a Tory, but it was an assertion entirely without foundation. Over and over again he stated that it was Lord Henley's * seat that he was trying to win, and that rather than risk the losing of it to a Tory he was prepared to submit to a decision of a test meeting of the electors. At that time there were 5,729 electors on the register, and of these as many as 3,400 were new voters, so extensively had the new Act affected the voting power in the single borough of Northampton. Mr Bradlaugh's offer to be governed by the decision of a public meeting of the electorate was entirely ignored. "It was in vain," says the writer of the little *Souvenir* book issued on the occasion of the unveiling of my father's statue at Northampton, "it was in vain that Mr Bradlaugh offered to abide by any fair test that might be devised to settle beforehand which of the two Liberal candidates in the field should go to the poll." A test ballot had been taken at Manchester to decide the claims of Ernest Jones. "If, however," continued the writer of the *Souvenir*, "the Manchester method were unacceptable, Mr Bradlaugh was prepared to agree to any other form of gauging the opinion of the constituency that was equally just to him" and to Lord Henley. But the Whigs seemed afraid to put it "to the touch," and my father's address was rapidly followed by one signed jointly by Charles Gilpin and Lord Henley. The Tories followed considerably later with two candidates, Messrs Merewether and Lendrick, and later still came a sixth candidate, Dr F. R. Lees, well known as a Temperance advocate. Why he came it is a little difficult to say, for before coming he wrote my father that he was not hostile to him; and he publicly declared that if he were elected in Mr Gilpin's place, he would at once resign in that gentleman's favour. Mr Bradlaugh therefore asked him, as it was impossible that both could win Lord Henley's seat, "to at once consent to adopt some course which will avoid division of the Radical strength." At his first meeting amendments were carried in Mr Bradlaugh's favour, but Dr Lees persisted right up to the last day, and abandoned his candidature "only on the day of the poll, when it was too late to prevent

* The sitting members were Charles Gilpin and Lord Henley.

nearly five hundred electors recording their votes on his behalf."*

During the whole time, from the end of June to mid-November, Mr Bradlaugh was of course constantly addressing meetings from one end to the other of the constituency, and it is rather curious to note that in one of his earliest speeches he shadowed forth what really happened to him twenty years later. At the conclusion of an address delivered in the theatre on the 16th of July on the subject of "Capital and Labour and Trades Unions," some one asked him whether if he were delegated to the House of Commons he could "guarantee to enact laws that should satisfy all Trades Unions and the public generally." "Certainly not," was the reply; "I daresay I should give as much dissatisfaction to Trades Unionists as anybody. But that would not be my fault. I should act honestly, and if the Trades Unionists were the bulk of my constituency, and they thought I acted in contravention of my programme, I should resign my trust into their hands." And when Mr Bradlaugh did act thus honestly in the matter of the Employers' Liability Bill in 1880, the Trades Unions were exceedingly dissatisfied with him, and were for the most part very bitter against him.

In a very short time the Northampton election became the subject of discussion everywhere, and the press from one end of England to the other had some sort of comment to make upon it —hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, of course. The *Daily Telegraph*, then professing Liberal views, was one of the earliest to raise the *odium theologicum* against him;† it speculated in pious dismay as to "what outrage on good taste and on the conscientious convictions of his fellow-citizens 'Iconoclast' may not attempt in the wider circle to which he seeks admittance," and held up its Jewish hands in holy horror in imagining the possibilities of a time "when Englishmen will revile the sublime moralities of the New Testament." My father challenged Mr Levy, the editor, to give an instance of any such "outrage" committed by him, adding, "I do more than this; the Government have, out of the public funds, paid for shorthand notes of several of my speeches since 1865. These notes still exist; I know in some cases the actual

---

* *Souvenir.*

† *Daily Telegraph*, August 3, 1868.

professional reporters employed, and I dare the publication of these notes."

The cowardly insinuations of the *Daily Telegraph* were printed as a placard and posted all over the town, where they produced the strongest excitement and bitterness. This placard was quickly followed by another of bright green, conveying a message from "The Irish Reform League to the Irishmen and friends of Ireland in Northampton." Northampton was entreated to return to Parliament "a man like Charles Bradlaugh, who advocated the cause of Ireland with pen and tongue when such advocacy was unpopular, if not dangerous." Irishmen in Dublin appealed to Irishmen in Northampton not to deserve the reproach of the defeat of such a man. "We, the Reformers of Ireland, gladly and heartily recommend him: by his works in the cause of Reform we know him; as a politician we endorse him; . . . we believe him to be true, we have faith in his political honesty, in his undaunted perseverance, and in his desire to elevate the downtrodden in our land and in his own." *

In September one of the newly enfranchised electors wrote to Mr John Bright for his advice as to the casting of his "maiden vote," and received from Mr Bright the following letter in reply:—

"Rochdale, September 17, 1868.

"Dear Sir,—I cannot interfere in your election matters, but I can answer the question you put to me.

"I do not think you can improve the representation of your borough by changing your members. I think Lord Henley and Mr Gilpin worthy of your support.—I am, yours truly, John Bright.

"Mr Thomas James, Northampton."

---

* In October Mr Keevil, chairman of the Irish Reform League, wrote again to Northampton. "Our members," he said, "consist of every denomination of Christians, and although we regret that Mr Bradlaugh does not believe in matters of religion as we do, and probably Mr Bradlaugh also regrets that we are not of the same religious opinions as himself, yet we do not think such controversial matters can hinder his usefulness for the people's work in the House of Commons. We in Ireland have had special opportunities of knowing the value of Mr Bradlaugh's works. . . . The field of Mr Bradlaugh's early labours was Ireland; the Lecture Hall in French Street, Dublin, was the arena of his triumphs, and the people soon recognised in him a champion. Private Bradlaugh was well known in County Cork many years ago as a man who would maintain the oppressed tenants against the injustice of landlordism."

When Mr Bradlaugh saw this letter, which was given the fullest publicity, he wrote Mr Bright as follows :—

"23 Great St. Helen's, London, E.C.
"September 19, 1868.

"SIR,—I feel some difficulty in intruding myself upon you ; but as you have taken a step in the Northampton election which I regard as prejudicial to my interests, you will pardon my trying to set the matter right. At the end of June I issued the address of which I enclose you a copy ; the only other address issued is that of the sitting members You will see in my address that I offered to submit my claims to the decision of an aggregate meeting, which offer has been entirely disregarded by Lord Henley. Whether or not Lord Henley is worthy of the support of the electors is a query to which a large proportion of the inhabitants of Northampton have already responded ; they declare that he is not. As to whether I shall make a better member, I here offer no other remark than that through my life I have actively striven to advance the cause of Reform ; while Viscount Henley has often discouraged and hindered effort, and has only voted in obedience to the irresistible pressure of public opinion. That you should support Mr Charles Gilpin with the weight of your great influence is natural, but that you should bolster up tumbling Whiggism as represented by Lord Henley I confess surprises me. Mr Gilpin's name has been associated as a working member in many highly valuable social and political reforms. Lord Henley's activity has been nearly limited to the prevention of compulsory education, the advocacy of increased expenditure for fortifications, and general care for landed interests.—Yours most obediently, CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

"JOHN BRIGHT, Esq., M.P.

"*P.S.*—I shall take the liberty of printing this letter and any reply you may forward me."

To my father's letter Mr Bright made answer that he had written an honest reply to a simple question, with no suspicion that he should be considered as taking sides with any party in the contest, adding some remarks as to his regard for past services and a tried fidelity, without any further definite opinion on Lord Henley's fitness. But if Mr Bright did not suspect that he should be considered as taking sides—and my father loyally accepted his statement—other people took a different view of the matter, and his letter was freely used against Mr Bradlaugh. The *Spectator* was of opinion that Mr Bright had succeeded "in more than neutralising the effect of Mr J. S. Mill's very injudicious and unexpected testimonial to Mr Bradlaugh's (Iconoclast's) claims as

candidate for Northampton;" whilst the *Saturday Review* considered that if this letter saved Northampton "from the discredit of electing Mr Bradlaugh," Mr Bright would have done the borough "valuable service."

Finding that this letter had been such a success, the Whigs next addressed themselves to Mr Gladstone, asking him if he endorsed the opinion expressed by Mr Bright. Mr Gladstone promptly replied in these terms:—

"Hawarden, N.W., Sept. 25, 1868.

"Sir,—While I am very unwilling to do or say anything that could be construed into interference in any election, I cannot refuse to consider the question you have put to me. Having for many years sat in Parliament with Lord Henley and Mr Gilpin, I have always considered both these gentlemen entitled to respect and confidence as upright and highly intelligent men, cordially attached to the Liberal party.—I remain, Sir, your faithful servant, W. E. Gladstone.

"I send this answer to you individually, and I should not wish it to be published unless you find that your brother-electors wish to know the purport of it."

I confess that I cannot understand the object of the postscript, for it must be manifest to the meanest intelligence that immediately it transpired that an elector had received a communication from Mr Gladstone upon the subject of the representation of the constituency, all the rest would be wild with curiosity "to know the purport of it." As a matter of course, it was read at the next meeting of the Liberal Association, and then reproduced in the public press.

In striving to win Lord Henley's seat, Mr Bradlaugh had not only Lord Henley, and Mr Bright, and Mr Gladstone fighting against him, but also Mr Gilpin, whose seat he was most anxious not to imperil. Mr Gilpin, although personally very friendly to my father, felt in honour bound to support his colleague, as he repeatedly stated at meeting after meeting: "Infinitely would he rather go back to London the rejected of Northampton than be the man who had deserted a friend in order to get another in." Nor was this by any means all that he had to contend against; he had actively against him nearly the whole of the press of England and Scotland, and no terms seemed too vile or slander too mean to use to injure him. Of all the newspapers circulating throughout the

United Kingdom, there were not more than three or four—of which the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* was one—who dared to say so much as a kindly word of him or of his candidature.

In the town of Northampton itself the opposition of the Whigs and the Tories grew so bitter and was carried to such an excess that in October it was found necessary to form a society for the purpose of aiding working men who lost their employment through their support of Mr Bradlaugh.

Dr F. R. Lees started a personal house-to-house canvass; this was followed by the joint canvass of Henley and Gilpin—undertaken at the urgent request of Lord Henley, for Mr Gilpin publicly declared it to be a practice which ought not to be encouraged—and then came my father's canvass. Much as he disliked it, he felt obliged in this case to do as the other candidates were doing; he issued an address, however, in which he said: "I desire to put on record my formal protest against the system of house-to-house canvassing, in which I only take part in obedience to the wish of my General Committee, and because all my opponents having resorted to it, some might think me slighting them if I abstained. I hold with Mr Gilpin that the system is a bad one. In canvassing, I do not come to beg your vote; if you need such a pitiable personal appeal, I prefer not having your support. I come to you that, seeing me, you may question me if you desire, and that you who cannot be present at the meetings may have the opportunity of better knowing my principles."

The canvassing in those days of open voting was even harder work than it is to-day; but Mr Bradlaugh was gallantly supported by a number of warm friends, amongst whom he was proud to have the veteran Thomas Allsop, and there was also much that was inspiring in coming face to face with the ardour and enthusiasm of the Northampton Radical working men. But if there was much to inspire, there was likewise sometimes much to sadden; in several instances a voter's wife answered that her husband "must look to his bread," and one threw an ominous light upon the penalty liable to be paid for a conscientious vote by saying that her husband "had lost his situation last election, and this time she would take care that he voted as his employer wished." My father, in the course of his canvass also, as might be expected, met with instances of "bitter and coarse fanaticism," which must have

been peculiarly unpleasant in the somewhat defenceless position of a candidate making a personal canvass.

At a great town's meeting, held for the purpose of hearing an expression of their political views and an account of their political action from the borough members, Mr Bradlaugh's committee sent a deputation to ask whether their candidate would be heard. They were told that he would be refused admission; he attended, and was refused admission, but his friends carried him in. The report before me says that "Mr Gilpin, on appearing on the platform, shook hands with Mr Bradlaugh and with Dr Lees; Lord Henley, supported chiefly by his legal advisers and their friends, shook hands with nobody, but shook himself when the groans echoed through the building." The four candidates addressed the meeting, but the uproar during Lord Henley's speech was so great that he could scarcely be heard, and the proceedings terminated with "three cheers for Bradlaugh."

As the weeks flew on, fiercer and fiercer grew the fight. The Lord's Day Rest Association came to the aid of the Northampton Whigs and Tories, and posted the town with placards headed: "Do not vote for Charles Bradlaugh unless you wish to lose your Sunday rest;" other candidates for other constituencies rushed to the rescue. Mr Giffard, Q.C.—now Lord Halsbury, then the Tory candidate for Cardiff, and the all-time bitter enemy of Mr Bradlaugh—said, with that fine regard for accuracy for which he has ever been distinguished: "Mr Bradlaugh was the avowed author of a work so blasphemous that one or two boroughs had refused to have anything to do with him."* Mr Charles Capper, M.P., also betrayed a similar inclination towards fiction. At a public meeting in Sandwich he related that he had been

"told by the hon. member for Northampton (Mr Gilpin) that the man whose name you have heard to-night, Mr Bradlaugh, stood in the Market Place of Northampton, and taking his watch from his pocket, said: 'It wants so many minutes to so-and-so. I will give you five minutes, and I call on your God, if he is your God, to strike me dead in this Market Place.' (Loud cries of 'Shame, shame.') That was Mr Bradlaugh, the man to whom Mr Mill sends his £10 to support his

* The latter part of this myth, at least, seems to have gained credence, for in July of this year (1894) Mr Courtney is reported to have said at Chelsea that "Mr Bradlaugh had to try constituency after constituency because he could not get a majority in any particular place."

candidature. Can you conceive anything more wretched? Do you think if a man of that kind were to come into this town (A voice: 'Turn him out') you would not turn him out?—you would kick him out!"

As will be seen when I come to deal fully with this subject, Mr Capper was not absolutely the first to have the doubtful honour of reviving this ancient "watch" story, and applying it to Mr Bradlaugh, and it is hardly necessary to say of so honourable a man as Mr Gilpin that, when my father saw him on the matter, he indignantly denied that he had ever said anything of the kind.

The *Primitive Methodist* * jubilantly remarked that "Iconoclast has been made to wince lately by the reproduction of his published opinions—very inconvenient to him at this time." My father's comment on this was that, "as a matter of fact, Mr Bradlaugh's published opinions are about the only things which have not been reproduced. His opponents prefer quoting the opinions of others, or else drawing on their imaginations."

The *Saturday Review* delighted in an attack on Mr Bradlaugh not merely for its own sake, but even more as a means of injuring Mr Mill. I have not heard that John Stuart Mill ever expressed the least regret for his donation, but had he done so there would have been small cause for wonder, for he had to pay a heavy penalty for his generosity. It was used against him everywhere, and his own defeat at Westminster was by many persons attributed to the outcry raised about his subscription towards my father's election expenses. Even the mighty *Times* was not too mighty to add its voice, saying that the countenance Mr Mill had given "Iconoclast" had given great offence to the middle classes. The use of the name "Iconoclast" was quite gratuitous, for Mr Mill did not send his cheque to assist in the work of "Iconoclast," the Atheist lecturer; he sent it for the use of Charles Bradlaugh, the Radical politician.

It will be a matter of interest to those connected with the movement against compulsory vaccination to know that during the course of this election contest Mr Bradlaugh attended a meeting in the Town Hall called by the Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League, and that, while expressing "no opinion as to the theory of vaccination," in view of the many objections urged

* See article on "Electioneering Rowdies," October 1868, in which, with innate delicacy, it speaks of Mr Bradlaugh as "impudent."

against the practice, he promised to support a demand for a Royal Commission for full investigation of the facts. The growth of opinion is so gradual that, although indeed there was a Select Committee in 1871, it was twenty years before the Commission was actually appointed, and then, as every one will remember, Mr Bradlaugh was himself nominated to sit upon it.

On the tenth of November, a week before the polling day, my mother, my grandfather (Mr A. Hooper), and we three children went to Northampton to attend a special tea-party given in the Corn Exchange, and I have a most vivid recollection of the enthusiasm then displayed. The time of our expected arrival having become known, hundreds of people, with bands and banners, came to meet us quite of their own accord, and when we returned to take the train back to London it seemed to my childish imagination as though the whole town must have turned out, for the streets were thronged from end to end with men and women cheering, singing the new song, "Bradlaugh for Northampton,"* laughing and crying in a veritable intoxication of excitement, until the moisture stood in my father's own eyes.

On the Monday after, ten thousand people were gathered in the market square to witness the nomination of the six candidates. The hustings, or, as I find it was sometimes called, the "booby hutch," was unusually large. It was built seventy feet long, in order to allow ten feet to each candidate and his supporters, and ten feet for the Mayor and the Corporation officials. The Mayor, Mr J. M. Vernon, opened the proceedings with a speech, and he was followed by the proposer and seconder of each candidate. Mr Bradlaugh was proposed by Mr Councillor Gurney, and seconded by Mr Dunkley. When these twelve speeches had come to an end, it fell to the candidates to address the electors. In the course of his speech Mr Gilpin alluded to the complaints that had been made against him for standing by Lord Henley. "Now," said he, "I want to do justice to a gentleman who stands on this platform. Mr Bradlaugh never made that complaint. He could honour the 'chivalry,' as he was pleased to call it, because he knew I could not have a selfish motive to serve in doing as I

* This song was written by a young shoemaker named James Wilson, and was set to music by another poor but gifted man, John Lowry. Poor Wilson died early, but his song became a sort of war-cry in Northampton, and will live long in the hearts of his fellow-townsmen.

did." The Mayor, in calling upon Mr Bradlaugh to address the eagerly waiting crowd, said: "Let me say that I have had the opportunity of witnessing the conduct of Mr Bradlaugh in presenting himself to this constituency. He has acted in the most gentlemanly way towards me, and I hope he can say in return that I have acted in the same manner towards him."

When all the speaking was over, and every one had had his "say," the Mayor took a show of hands for the various candidates, and declared the result to be in favour of Mr Gilpin and Mr Bradlaugh, a statement which was received with the utmost enthusiasm.

And yet my father was beaten: crowds did not always mean voters; and so, in spite of grand meetings, in spite of popular enthusiasm, he was beaten. His partial canvass resulted in promises of 1600 votes, whereas only 1086 were recorded for him, so that at the last moment 500 at least failed to give their votes as they had promised. In his *Autobiography* * he himself says: "I was beaten; but this is scarcely wonderful. I had all the journals in England except three against me. Every idle or virulent tale which folly could distort or calumny invent was used against me."

The poll took place on Tuesday the 17th of November, and was officially declared by the Mayor from the hustings in the market square on Wednesday at eleven o'clock.

The figures were:—

C. Gilpin	2632
Lord Henley	2105
C. G. Merewether	1625
W. E. Lendrick	1378
C. Bradlaugh	1086
Dr F. R. Lees	485 †

* Page 28.

† These were the figures given in *National Reformer*, November 22, 1868. The *Northampton Mercury* of that week gives them rather differently, and the *Souvenir* brought out in June 1894 again differently. They give the poll as follows:—

	Mercury.	*Souvenir.*
Gilpin	2691	2623
Henley	2154	2111
Merewether	1634	1631
Lendrick	1396	1374
Bradlaugh	1086	1069
Lees	492	492

After the public declaration of the poll the various candidates were supposed to "return thanks" for the support given them, but three only—Mr Gilpin, Lord Henley, and Mr Bradlaugh—appeared on the hustings. Mr Gilpin in a short speech said: "I turn to Mr Bradlaugh, and I say to him that since I met him in Northampton I have had prejudices removed in reference to himself, and I say unreservedly, when I observed the peace of this town, after the exciting scenes that we have had, I feel, and I should not be an honest man if I did not acknowledge it, it is owing to Mr Bradlaugh having used his influence to obtain it." These generous words of Mr Gilpin's were received with much cheering, and when it came to the Mayor's turn to speak he too said: "I feel it my duty to acknowledge my obligations to Mr Bradlaugh, because he not merely endorsed the sentiments I uttered, * but from the balcony of his hotel he backed them up by all the power of argument he possesses in urging you to comply with my wishes. I knew the appeal that was being made to you was made under the most exciting circumstances, and I felt the way in which it was conducted might leave an impression on the people of this country for a long time to come."

Charles Gilpin did more than speak favourably of Mr Bradlaugh from Northampton platforms. A day or two after the election he wrote to the *Morning Star*:—

"Sir,—I observe that several papers continue to reflect in strong terms on the candidature of Mr Bradlaugh at Northampton, and it is not of course for me to defend him; but I think it should be known that at the declaration of the poll, the Mayor publicly thanked him for his successful efforts to preserve peace and good order in the borough during an unusually exciting contest, and from my own observation I can fully endorse the observations of the Mayor.—I am, sir, yours truly, Charles Gilpin.

"November 20."

Mr Gilpin, moreover, undeterred by the furious onslaught made upon John Stuart Mill, sent a donation of £10 towards Mr Bradlaugh's election expenses, and in the March before he died he recommended Mr Pickering Perry, his own agent, to vote for him.

The extracts from Mr Gilpin's and the Mayor's speeches I have taken from the *Northampton Mercury*, a paper then thoroughly hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, and I confess to a feeling of shame that

* Praying that there should be no breach of the peace.

it should be necessary at this time of day to thus bring forward "witnesses to character"; yet, while there are many now willing to concede that my father was in his later years an honourable, temperate, law-abiding, and even "distinguished" man, they add that he was not all this in his early years: then he was coarse, violent, and vulgar. If the word of the Mayor of Northampton in 1868 counts for anything, and if the manly testimony of one of Northampton's most honoured members, the Quaker Charles Gilpin, has any weight, men will find that they must still further revise their opinion of Charles Bradlaugh, and admit that the change has been in themselves and not in him, that the qualities they grant for him in 1890 were his in 1868, and from the very outset of his career. There was no greater change in him than comes to us all through the mellowing touch of time; in truth, he changed less than would most men, and in spite of being a Radical and Reformer of a very advanced type, he was in many ways extremely conservative. He clung to old friends, to old habits, and to precedent. He formed his opinions not hastily but yet rapidly, and after due deliberation, deliberation which included a really marvellous power of putting both sides of the question before himself and others. His judgment once formed, he was extremely slow to alter it, and a course of action once entered upon, he was rarely if ever diverted from it.

My father left Northampton, followed to the station by such an enormous crowd of sorrowing men and women that his defeat was grander than many a victory; he could never, he said, forget those whose hot tears dropped on his hands on the day he left the borough, and as he wrote those words we may be sure that his own tears dimmed his eyes and blurred the page. Hard as iron to opposition, he was acutely sensitive to every token of affection or kindly feeling.

But there were more to rejoice over his defeat than to sorrow for it. The Rev. Thomas Arnold, addressing an audience of Northampton men, said, regardless of his own blasphemy, that they had shown that "they would not be servants of the man who trampled on their God and their Saviour;" and the Rev. A. Mursell, who a few years later found more kindly things to say of my father, speaking at Dundee, "thanked God that Mr Bradlaugh had been so signally defeated."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOUTHWARK ELECTION, 1869.

About a year after the General Election the appointment of Mr Layard as ambassador at Madrid created a vacancy at Southwark, and a number of working men electors immediately asked Mr Bradlaugh to become a candidate for that borough. Meetings were summoned for the purpose of proposing his name, and a committee was formed with a view of promoting his election, and a very active committee it proved to be. At a crowded meeting, convened by forty of the "chiefs of the Liberal Party," held in the middle of November, six names of possible representatives were brought forward—Mr Milner Gibson, Sir Francis Lycett, Sir Sydney Waterlow, Sir John Thwaites, and Mr Odger. The "forty chiefs" did not propose Mr Bradlaugh, whose name was however received with great cheering, when it was proposed by way of amendment by Mr Hearn, a Southwark Radical. A week later a meeting was held to decide upon a candidate to be supported by the working-class electors of the borough, and this meeting both Mr Odger and Mr Bradlaugh were invited to attend. The room engaged for the purpose was soon full to overflowing, and at length the speakers adjourned to the balcony in front of the house and addressed the crowd of three thousand people congregated in the road below. Mr Odger was unable to come, and after Mr Bradlaugh had addressed the meeting a resolution in his favour was passed by "an overwhelming majority."* He said that although he was there at the earnest invitation of several working men, he was not to be regarded as a candidate until he had issued his address. If Mr Odger came definitely before the constituency and was pledged to go to the poll, he should not contest the borough himself. He wished to see Mr George Odger in Parliament, and he believed that he would be an admirable representative.

* *Daily News.*

Apart from any question of Mr Odger's possible candidature, my father had another reason for hesitating before incurring such heavy expenses as the contest of Southwark would entail: the Northampton election, in spite of the long subscription lists made up from slender purses, had left him heavily burdened with debt. In August (1869) he wrote that he had still £250 of borrowed money to repay; by November this had become reduced, though even then there was still £100 "due to a friend at Norwich, and £20 to another friend in Huddersfield." A debt of £120 will seem a mere bagatelle to a rich man, who will pay more for a handsome dog that takes his fancy, and ten times as much for a thoroughbred horse; to a poor man, however, a debt of £120 is a millstone. And for that matter, if this debt had been the only one, my father would soon have repaid it, but he was hampered on all sides. Being so encumbered, he naturally felt bound "to exercise extra caution in contracting further liabilities for election purposes, especially as the large portion of the funds for such a struggle would probably be provided by my working friends throughout the United Kingdom, whose subscriptions I have no right to take except with the certainty of fighting a creditable if not a successful fight."

However, at the end of November all hesitation on my father's part was brought to an end by the receipt of the following letter from Mr Odger:—

"Dear Mr Bradlaugh,—I have decided on going to the poll. I shall see the Southwark Committee this evening (November 29th), and make the declaration to-morrow.

"Thanking you for your manly and straightforward conduct,—I remain, yours truly, Geo. Odger.

"18 High Street, Bloomsbury."

Under these circumstances my father at once announced that he should not seek the suffrages of the Southwark electors. He believed Mr Odger had a better chance of being supported by voters "who would be afraid of returning one whom the *Daily Telegraph* had described as an English 'irreconcilable,'" although, as he frankly said, he made no disguise of his wish to be in Parliament, and of his intention to be there as soon as possible. He earnestly entreated all his friends in the borough to give their unreserved support to George Odger, who was a real representative man.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LITIGATION, 1867-1871.

Mr Bradlaugh took part in so many law-suits during his life that people have hurriedly jumped at conclusions, and condemned him as a "litigious" man. They have not troubled to consider the circumstances of the different suits; it was sufficient that Mr Bradlaugh took part in them, and that at once stamped him as litigious. Now, as a matter of fact, it will be found that in a large number of cases he figured as *defendant* in the action, and where he was plaintiff I think it must be admitted that it was rarely without sufficient cause. Although many years constantly libelled, he seldom brought an action for libel; there were indeed such actions, all of which will be found mentioned in this book. After he had engaged a hall for lectures, it was no uncommon thing for the proprietor to break his contract; and if it was a very gross case this occasionally resulted in a suit, but much more frequently he accepted the situation, trusting to time to wear away prejudices against him.

In each of the four cases I am now about to speak of Mr Bradlaugh was the plaintiff. The first was an action arising purely out of his business as a financial agent, and would have little interest now were it not for the terms of the Vice-Chancellor's judgment. The second also arose in the course of business, but was greatly complicated by the oath question. The third was a libel case; while the fourth was against the Mirfield Town Hall Company for breach of contract.

In January 1867 the case of the English Joint Stock Bank (Limited) and Charles Bradlaugh was heard in the Court of Chancery before Vice-Chancellor Wood. Mr Bradlaugh claimed to be admitted as a creditor against the Bank, then in course of winding up, for £12,350, or for such less sum as the Court might think just and reasonable, in consideration of his having negotiated a purchase for the Bank of the banking business of

Messrs Harvey & Hudson of Norwich for the sum of £210,000. The sum thus claimed was the one agreed to be paid him by the general manager of the Bank. The Court decided against him for reasons not necessary to enter fully upon here, and the Vice-Chancellor's judgment was reported at considerable length in the *Times* of the following day. The extracts given here are based upon the shorthand notes of the case. Vice-Chancellor Wood commenced his judgment by referring to "the great ability with which Mr Bradlaugh had argued his case;" and after dealing with the arguments at some length, said that he regretted to come to the conclusion that there was no completed agreement which could be enforced, "as Mr Bradlaugh—to whom he gave implicit credit as to everything stated by him on his own recollection—had no doubt been put to very great trouble and anxiety, but in deciding against his present claim he would not be shut out from obtaining what he could for his services on a *quantum meruit*. The costs of the summons would be reserved until the result of such an application should have been ascertained. The question had been argued with extreme ability by Mr Bradlaugh, and he could not possibly have been assisted better by whatever counsel he could have retained than he had been by his own advocacy. He had put it in the clearest and most concise manner possible, and the Court had been much assisted by the whole of his argument. He had very fairly produced every document that he knew anything about, or which he thought could throw any light upon the transaction." The Vice-Chancellor repeated that he gave unfeigned credit to everything that Mr Bradlaugh had said; he did not try to exaggerate or to improve upon his case; and he was sorry—because he had no doubt that Mr Bradlaugh had had great trouble and anxiety in the matter—he was sorry that he must decide against him on his claim.

These words of Vice-Chancellor Wood's are specially valuable; first, as showing a judge's appreciation of Mr Bradlaugh's legal ability even when he was arguing a case which concerned an ordinary business matter only, and was neither directly or indirectly a defence of those principles of liberty of speech, of press, or of conscience which were so close to his heart; and next, as a tribute to that calm and well-balanced temperament which even as a young man of thirty-three enabled him to state his case so manifestly without gloss or exaggeration.

Later in the same year (1867) my father commenced a suit against a gentleman named De Rin. This case went through various Courts, and although the subject in dispute was really a private matter, the peculiar course taken by the defendant resulted in a public benefit, viz. the extension of the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869. The suit, begun in 1867, was not finally disposed of until 1870, but during these years the side issue of the competency of an Atheist to give evidence involved so much fighting that my father actually lost about fifteen hundred pounds before it was decided in his favour.

As endorser of three bills of exchange, Mr Bradlaugh brought an action against Mr De Rin as acceptor of the same. The bills were drawn in Brussels, and sent for acceptance to the defendant in England; he accepted, and afterwards endorsed them to a legal gentleman named Gallet, who in turn endorsed them in France to Mr Bradlaugh. The action was brought by the latter to enable him to realise the bills in this country, and was heard before Mr Justice Montague Smith and a common jury, in the Court of Common Pleas, in December 1867. Mr Lumley Smith was counsel for the plaintiff; Mr D. Keane, Q.C., and Mr Wood were for the defendant.

When Mr Bradlaugh entered the witness-box Mr Keane interposed, saying: "I have a most painful duty to perform, and that is to object to the witness being sworn on account of his being an Atheist and holding notoriously Atheistic opinions." Mr Keane repeated that he felt it an extremely painful duty, but that he had no discretion in the matter; he had instructions to take this objection, and therefore he must take in. He added: "At the same time I must say that I have met Mr Bradlaugh several times on business, and have never seen any conduct on his part unbecoming a gentleman."

Mr Justice Smith: "You have power, Mr Keane, to waive the objection. Sometimes it is material to make the objection considering the matters in issue. But in the present case is it so? I consider this a case in which the objection had better be waived."

As counsel against Mr Bradlaugh in the Devonport case, Mr Montague Smith, Q.C., had himself examined Mr Bradlaugh upon his opinions, but this he considered altogether a different matter; this was purely a commercial transaction.

Mr Bradlaugh stated that he was ready to affirm or to give evidence upon oath, and after a short discussion Mr Justice Smith said that he should take it upon himself to allow him to affirm; but Mr Keane again interposed, urging that he would not be competent to do so. Mr Bradlaugh then made his counsel formally tender him as a witness, but after some conversation Mr Keane agreed to admit the facts which Mr Bradlaugh was to prove. It was then contended that the endorsement was not valid according to the law of France, but ultimately the verdict was given for the plaintiff, with leave to the defendant to move the verdict for him on the objections he had raised.

Mr De Rin accordingly moved the Court of Common Pleas, and in July 1868 the Court granted a rule absolute to enter the verdict for the defendant, on the ground that the endorsement did not confer on the plaintiff the right of suing on the bills in this country. Mr Bradlaugh appealed against this decision to the Court of Exchequer, and the Court of Appeal suggested an inquiry as to the fact whether the endorsed bills came into Mr Bradlaugh's possession by post in England or whether they were handed to him in France, and Mr S. Prentice, Q.C., was nominated as a referee to ascertain the fact. When the case came on appeal before Mr Justice Lush in October 1868, in the Exchequer Chamber, bail had to be given for costs, and Mr Austin Holyoake was tendered as such bail, but Mr Wood, counsel for the defendant De Rin, objected to Mr Holyoake as not competent to take the oath. "I am known to be a Freethinker," wrote Austin Holyoake, with just indignation, "and it is therefore competent for any solicitor or barrister to openly insult me by calling in question my ability to speak the truth."

After a very long delay, in December 1869 the case came before Mr Prentice to ascertain, as I have said, whether the bills were delivered to Mr Bradlaugh in England or in France. Once more Mr Bradlaugh presented himself as a witness, to prove their delivery to him in England, and once more, despite the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act in the previous August, his evidence was objected to. Mr Bradlaugh appeared in person, and Mr Wood, who had been counsel for the defendant at the hearing before Mr Justice Lush, again appeared for him. On Mr Bradlaugh tendering himself as witness, Mr Wood—who, like

his predecessor Mr Keane, said that, acting under special instructions, he took a course which gave him considerable pain—asked him: "Do you believe in God?"

Mr Bradlaugh's objection to answer this question was followed by a long discussion, at the end of which Mr Prentice held that he was bound to answer. Again Mr Wood put the question: "Do you believe in God?"

Mr Bradlaugh: "I do not; that is, I do not believe in any being independent of the universe, governing or ruling it."

Mr Prentice: "Do you believe in a future state of rewards and punishments?"

Mr Bradlaugh: "After death, certainly not."

"Then," said Mr Prentice, "I must refuse your evidence."

A day or so later my father, undaunted, carried his case before Mr Justice Brett at Judges' Chambers, and asked for an order to compel Mr Prentice to take his evidence; but Mr Justice Brett held, although with some doubt, that Mr Prentice was not authorised by the Act of Parliament to administer the alternative declaration.* The Judge added that Mr Bradlaugh ought to have liberty to apply to the Court against the decision, and endorsed his judgment with the opinion that it was "a fit case to go before the full court."

A few days after this refusal of Mr Prentice to hear his evidence, and Mr Justice Brett's confirmation of this refusal, Mr Bradlaugh was called as a witness in the Central Criminal Court to prove the signature of Dr Shorthouse of the *Sporting Times* in an action for libel brought by Sir Joseph Hawley. On his objecting to take the oath he was readily permitted to give his evidence upon affirmation. Such was the confusion in which the law of evidence was left after the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869. A witness perfectly competent to give

* The Evidence Amendment Act 1869 (32 and 33 Vict. c. 68) enacted "that if any person called to give evidence in any court, whether in a civil or criminal proceeding, shall object to take an oath, or shall be objected to as incompetent to take an oath, such person shall, if the presiding judge is satisfied that the taking of the oath would have no binding effect upon his conscience, make the promise and declaration the form of which is contained in the same section." Mr Prentice, as arbitrator, did not consider himself a "presiding judge" within the meaning of the Act, and was not therefore qualified to satisfy himself as to the state of a witness's conscience.

evidence in one Court was incompetent in another, or else it was a matter of doubt whether he was competent or not.

In January 1870 Mr Bradlaugh carried his case before Lord Chief Justice Bovill and Justices Keating, Brett, and Montague Smith, in the Court of Common Pleas; but after half-an-hour's argument the Judges refused to hear him on the ground that he was not moving on affidavit. "That is," said Mr Bradlaugh, "I was sent back to be sworn as to the refusal of my testimony before I could be allowed to argue that I was not liable to take the oath, and before I could be allowed to claim that I had, notwithstanding, the right to give evidence." A very pretty tangle of contradiction!

He then proceeded to satisfy all conventions by swearing (affidavits could not then be affirmed) that Mr Prentice did not consider him competent to give evidence on oath, nor himself competent to receive the evidence on affirmation. Mr Bradlaugh returned two days later to the Court of Common Pleas and asked that "Mr Prentice be directed to take the evidence of Mr Charles Bradlaugh on the fact to be stated in a special case." After a very long argument the Court decided that it had no power to give directions to an arbitrator.

Although no more advanced than when he first brought his action in the winter of 1867, Mr Bradlaugh did not even yet despair, but determined to carry his case to the highest possible legal tribunal. Pending the final decision of the law, petitions were got up all over the country and sent into Parliament, praying for a further amendment of the Act.

On the 7th of February the case was mentioned at the Sittings in Error; but although there were seven judges present, Lord Chief Baron Kelly refused to proceed with it in the absence of the Lord Chief Justice. He said that the case was one "of the greatest possible importance, not only in this country, but throughout all Europe; it was therefore of importance that the Court should be so constituted as to insure general satisfaction with its decision. The Lord Chief Justice Cockburn had been present when an argument on part of the case had been heard; it would be advisable, therefore, that the case should stand over until the Sittings in Error after the next term."

In consequence of this, it was not until the 16th of May that the long-drawn-out proceedings in this suit—involving at the outset

a simple business transaction, but now including far wider issues—entered upon their final stage. For more than two years justice had been persistently perverted from its course, and used as the tool of fraud, but now at length matters wore a different aspect. The case was heard in the Court of Exchequer Chamber, before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, Lord Chief Baron Kelly, Justices Blackburn, Mellor, and Lush, and Barons Channell and Cleasby. The Court was unanimous in its decision that the endorsee was entitled to sue, and that the verdict must be entered for Mr Bradlaugh. The Lord Chief Justice remarked that the defendant had no merits at all in the case; he had relied upon this "somewhat unrighteous" defence, and the judgment now given was "in accordance with the good sense and justice and equity in the case."

So, in the end, my father won his suit, but the victory was very costly. The judgment of the Court of Exchequer did not entitle him to recover any of the expenses he had incurred in fighting the oath question. Upon that point the decision of the Court of Common Pleas was final. In a public statement made at the end of the year at Bristol, in reply to some observations which had fallen from Professor Newman, Mr Bradlaugh remarked that in contesting the oath question in the law courts he had himself lost £1500. This was an allusion to his losses in the De Rin case, the costs in which alone reached to more than £1100; in addition to these enormous costs, he lost his debt of £360 because the Christian De Rin, who objected to the evidence of an Atheist, became bankrupt when the case was finally decided.

Before the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act in 1869 all persons who disbelieved in God or in a future state of rewards and punishments were held to be incompetent to give evidence in a Court of Law. Freethinkers had long and bitterly felt the injustice and hardship of their position; and in 1868 and 1869, after the first action in the case of Bradlaugh and De Rin, a most determined effort was made to move Parliament to amend the law of evidence. The National Secular Society sent in petitions to the House of Commons, and the Executive of that Society put itself in communication with members of both Houses. Mr Bradlaugh said in 1870 that they tried "to pass a much more distinct clause in favour of Freethinkers than the one as it now stands, which is in its legal effect entirely different from the clause

as originally drawn by the Hon. Mr Denman, and printed in the Bill first read before the Commons. It is Lord Cairns to whom we were ultimately indebted for the main words which really serve us in the Act of 1869."

In 1870 another Bill, prepared by the Hon. G. Denman and Mr Locke King, was passed through Parliament to further amend the law of evidence, but it only met such difficulties as had arisen in the case of Bradlaugh and De Rin, and did not touch the law as it related to jurymen, affidavits, or Scotland. Mr Bradlaugh was continually urging members of the House to get these points amended, but nothing further was done until he himself carried his Oaths Act of 1888, by which the whole law relating to oaths was radically altered.

Until the passing of this Act, jurors without religious belief were liable to be committed to prison if they refused to be sworn, and the law did not permit them to affirm. Affidavits on interlocutory proceedings could only be made upon oath. In Scotland all Atheists and disbelievers in eternal torment were, in addition, incompetent as witnesses.

In any case, too much discretion was left to the Judge, who was supposed to satisfy himself, according to the monstrous formula laid down by the Act, that the oath would have "no binding effect" upon the conscience of a heretical witness. A promise is binding upon the conscience of an honest man in whatever form it may be made, and it put Freethinkers in an entirely false position to be obliged to assent to the statement that some particular form was not binding upon them. Conscientious witnesses who wished to affirm hardly knew what to answer when the Judge put the question to them, and he would not always be satisfied with the mere statement that the oath gave no additionally binding effect to the promise. And sometimes his assent to the formula would be used to the discredit of a witness. I myself once heard Baron Huddleston tell the jury that it was for them to consider what was the value of the evidence of a witness whom an oath would not bind.

Amongst the multitude of papers hostile to Mr Bradlaugh's candidature for Parliamentary honours in 1868 was one called the *Razor*. This journal went so far in its condemnatory strictures that Mr Bradlaugh felt—as his counsel, Mr Digby Seymour, put it

—that he had no option but to bring an action against the proprietor. The *Razor* must have been in a general way a tolerably obscure publication, for when I went to look it up in the British Museum, no trace of it could be discovered, although the officials there took considerable pains to find it for me. But the article against Mr Bradlaugh had been recopied from its columns and widely circulated in Northampton, where it was calculated to produce serious mischief. Later on Northampton grew accustomed to hearing my father accused of every possible crime, and, knowing their absolute falsity, became hardened to such slanders; still, at that time the acquaintance was comparatively young between Northampton and the man whose statue it has this year placed in one of its most public thoroughfares.

The libel endeavoured to connect Mr Bradlaugh with Broadhead (of the Sheffield trade outrages), and with the misdeeds of which Mr Montagu Leverson had been guilty two years after my father quitted his office. It was published on August 15th, and was read by Mr Bradlaugh on the 19th. He at once telegraphed a demand for an apology, and on the same day received a letter from the proprietor saying that the editor, who was then absent, would be requested to offer a suitable apology. This the editor showed no inclination to do, and some correspondence ensued. Ultimately the *Razor* people agreed to publish a statement of facts if Mr Bradlaugh would draw it up and send it to them. This he did, but the statement did not appear, and, tired of these proceedings, in October he issued a writ against them. The case came on in December, at the *nisi prius* sittings at the Guildhall, before Mr Justice Blackburn and a common jury. Mr Bradlaugh did not conduct his own case, but Mr Digby Seymour, Q.C., and Mr Day appeared on his behalf, while the defendant Mr Brooks was represented by Mr O'Malley, Q.C., and Mr Griffiths.

No attempt was made to justify the libel, nor was any apology offered, although Mr Digby Seymour intimated the willingness of his client to accept it even at that late hour. Mr Bradlaugh was the only witness (the defence called no evidence whatever) other than those required for formal proofs; and, having no case, the counsel for the defence endeavoured to excite the prejudices of the jury by cross-examining him as to his theological opinions. The method pursued by Mr O'Malley was so gross that, lest I seem to do him an injustice, I will quote the exact words of the

report of his cross-examination. After asking a number of questions about Broadhead and trades unions, Mr O'Malley asked:

"Do you believe in the existence of a God?"

C. BRADLAUGH: I decline to answer that question, because, according to the present laws of this country I might by so doing render myself liable to prosecution.

Mr O'M.: Have you not said, "There is no God"?

C. B.: No; on the contrary, I have repeatedly said and written that an atheist does not say "There is no God."

Mr O'M.: Have you not made statements in public against the existence of God?

C. B.: I decline to answer that question.

Mr O'M.: Did you not once at a public lecture take out your watch and defy the Deity, if he had any existence, to strike you dead in a certain number of minutes?

C. B.: Never; such a suggestion is utterly unjustifiable.

Mr JUSTICE BLACKBURN: If any issues in the action depended on this course of proceeding, Mr O'Malley, I should not object, but I cannot see that these questions have any relevance to the matter before us.

Mr O'M.: I think I shall be able to show by a few questions more the importance of the plaintiff's answers. Are you (to plaintiff) a writer in the *National Reformer?* And have you written under the name of "Iconoclast"?

C. B.: I decline to answer these questions, because prosecutions for penalties are at present pending against the *National Reformer* at the instance of the late Government.

Mr O'M.: Did you write this passage, which appeared in the *National Reformer:* "There is a great big monkey," etc. [fable already referred to on p. 233].

C. B., after some hesitation: I might refuse to answer this question on the same ground I have refused to answer the other questions. I prefer, however, to answer, and I say that passage did appear in a paper with which I was connected, but was not written by me. It was part of a translation of a German fable, and was copied nearly two years ago into the *Saturday Review* without the context. If the context were read with it, the meaning of the passage would be entirely different. It related as much to Hinduism as to Christianity. I wrote a reply to the *Saturday Review* at the time.*

Mr O'M.: Did you ever take legal proceedings against the *Saturday Review* for publishing this article?

C. B.: No; I considered it a criticism on my opinions, and answered it by other articles in other papers. I should never sue a journal for an attack on my opinions.

---

* This reply was refused insertion.

Mr O'M. : Do you believe in the truth of the Christian religion ?

C. B. : I decline to answer, because it is a prosecutable offence for a man to deny the truth of Christianity after he had been brought up in its tenets.

The defence, as I have said, called no witnesses; but Mr O'Malley was a host in himself, and as far as the jury were concerned, the "eloquence" of his address more than made up for the weakness of his case. He said that from Mr Bradlaugh's refusals to answer his questions, "it is fair to assume that he has no character to be injured by such a criticism as this," meaning by that that an Atheist had no character to be injured when his principles were likened to those of such a man as Broadhead, a "self-confessed assassin," and his morality to that of a man compelled to flee the country on a charge of fraud. Mr O'Malley went on to say that while it would have been better if the article had not appeared, "it was nonsense to talk of it as injury to the notorious character of such a man. The smallest amount of damages would be sufficient to set up the character of that 'noble' man. He asked the jury, as Christian men, to refrain from giving their endorsement to that man Bradlaugh, to that man Bradlaugh, to that man Bradlaugh."

In the course of his summing up, Mr Justice Blackburn said that "all in Court must have been disgusted with some of the questions which had been put in cross-examination." That all were not disgusted was soon apparent, for, after a short consultation, the jury, feeling bound to respond to this appeal to their Christianity, returned a verdict for the plaintiff indeed, but with one farthing damages.

My father was deeply hurt at the mockery of this verdict, and, overcome by a sense of helplessness in the face of such intolerance, he wrote these bitter words :—

"Outlaw or Citizen? Which am I?

"When at Bolton I sued for damages occasioned by the breach of contract for the hire of the hall in which the lectures were to be delivered, I was non-suited by the County Court Judge on the ground that the lectures to be delivered were illegal (although there was, of course, no possible evidence of what I should have said). When I was illegally arrested at Devonport, confined in a damp cell for one night, and twice brought before the magistrates,

an Exeter jury, although they in point of fact decided entirely in my favour, gave me one farthing damages; and Lord Chief Justice Erle, on appeal to the Court sitting in *banco*, laid down the doctrine that the imprisonment which prevented a man like myself from making known his views (although that imprisonment had been by the verdict of the jury utterly unjustifiable) was rather a benefit to the individual imprisoned than a wrong for which damages could be sought. When, at Wigan, the evidence of myself and a gentleman and his wife were all refused by the County Court Judge, on the ground of our being all well-known Secularists, I was legally robbed of nearly thirty pounds. When concerned about three years ago in another litigation, the statement of my opponent that I was 'Iconoclast, the Atheist,' sufficed to defeat me. When I sued as plaintiff last year in an action to which there was no defence [Bradlaugh *v.* De Rin] in the Court of Common Pleas, my evidence was objected to on account of my disbelief in the Scriptures. When on appeal on a point of law I tendered Mr Austin Holyoake as bail, he was refused because he was a well-known heretic, and could not therefore be allowed to be sworn. Now I am grossly libelled, the libel is not justified; the only cross-examination is on my opinions; and the counsel for the defendant, who actually admits that the libel ought never to have appeared, asked the jury to give me the smallest possible damages because I am an Atheist. The jury respond to his appeal to their religious prejudices, and I get one farthing damages. What am I to do? If when I am libelled I take no notice, the world believes the libel. If I sue I have to pay about one hundred pounds costs for the privilege, and gain the smallest coin the country knows as a recompense. Duelling is forbidden alike by my code of morals and the law of the country. If I horsewhip the libeller, I am punishable for assault. Am I outlaw or citizen—which? Answer me, you who boast your superiority; you whose religion makes you better than myself. What mockery to tell me that I live in a free country, when it is thus justice is dealt out to such as I am!

"CHARLES BRADLAUGH."

In January (1869) Mr Bradlaugh prayed the Court to grant him a rule for a new trial, and Lord Chief Justice Cockburn observed that "no one could say that because a man was an Atheist (even

assuming him to be one) anyone was entitled to say he was a murderer or a swindler. That, however, probably was not quite the way in which it was put to the jury; it was probably put rather in this way, that when a man had publicly put forth certain sentiments in certain language, it might be that his character was not such as deserved or required much vindication. As a general principle the damages in actions of tort, especially in actions for libel, were eminently for the jury." Mr Justice Mellor made some similar remarks, and Mr Justice Hannen having put some questions as to the refusal of the apology and the manner of the denial of the charge, the Lord Chief Justice granted the rule.

It never came to a new trial, however, for in the following November the defendant, Mr Brooks, withdrew the whole of the charges against Mr Bradlaugh and apologised for their publication, but his solicitor intimated that he was in no position to pay the costs. Therefore, although my father obtained the barren satisfaction of this tardy apology and the withdrawal of the charges, it cost him not less than £200. The *Razor* itself did not survive this litigation, for before the new year of 1869 had dawned it was already discontinued.

In accordance with the wishes of some Yorkshire friends, Mr Bradlaugh had promised to give two political lectures in Mirfield on the 18th and 19th November 1870. The Mirfield Town Hall was engaged for this purpose on the 21st of September, and the lectures announced were—"War: its Effect upon European Peoples, and an Appeal for Peace," and "England's Balance Sheet." The hall belonged to a Company, and when it was realised that their property was let to the wicked Atheist for the purpose of pleading the cause of peace in Europe, some of the directors objected, and objected so strongly, to the proposed desecration of their building that they determined to back out of the agreement under the pretence that the hall-keeper had no authority to let it, although, in fact, he had taken four guineas, money paid for the hire of the hall, and had given a receipt for it. Mr Bradlaugh persisted in his right to lecture, and on making inquiries learned that the hall-keeper had let the hall on former occasions without any objection on the part of the directors. In order to complicate matters the Directors let the hall for the dates assigned to Mr Bradlaugh to a party of Ethiopian serenaders.

As Mr Bradlaugh made no sign of yielding when the time arrived, the assistance of the police was summoned, and the hall was guarded, inside and out, by a body of constabulary numbering about thirty men, under a superintendent. The directors evidently loved war better than peace. Mr Bradlaugh reached Mirfield at about a quarter past six on the evening of the 18th, but, fearing a disturbance, he went straight to the Town Hall, at once and alone, although the meeting was not summoned until eight o'clock Upon reaching the hall he found it prepared for a siege; in addition to its garrison of police, it was barricaded with huge baulks of timber. He held some conversation with the Superintendent of the Police, who was sufficiently polite, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors, a gentleman particularly prominent in his opposition to Mr Bradlaugh, and now present to watch over the premises in person. During the conversation a crowd of about four hundred people collected, but at my father's request they remained perfectly quiet and took no part in the proceedings. Mr Bradlaugh then endeavoured to open the door, but in addition to being strongly barricaded the handle was held by Mr Johnson (the Chairman), and another man, the former of whom boasted that he would spend a large sum to keep Bradlaugh out of Mirfield. Finding the force against him too great, my father, after a little struggle, gave up the attempt to enter.

He at once commenced an action against the Town Hall Company, but owing to various delays the suit was not tried until the summer of 1871. It then came on at the Leeds Assizes on August 7th, before Mr Justice Mellor and a special jury. Mr Bradlaugh conducted his own case, while Mr Digby Seymour, Q.C., and Mr Mellor appeared for the Hall Company. Mr Bradlaugh opened in "a very temperate speech" of "great clearness," and then called his witness, Mr Stead, to prove the hire of the hall. Mr Stead had to go through a preliminary confusing examination as to his fitness to make affirmation, although Mr Justice Mellor was as considerate as the obnoxious wording of the Evidence Amendment Act would allow. Objection being taken to certain questions Mr Bradlaugh wished to put to his witness, my father was obliged to go into the witness-box himself to prove the points. Of course Mr Digby Seymour could not forget the lesson in tactics learned a few months before from Mr O'Malley, and like his opponent in the *Razor* case—though

happily with less coarseness—seized the opportunity thus offered to rouse the religious prejudices of the jury, although the sole question in dispute was the validity of a contract made by the servant of a Company on its behalf.

But relevant or irrelevant, by hook or by crook, the religious question was almost invariably dragged in against Mr Bradlaugh: and just as invariably a bad case was bolstered up by diverting the minds of the jury from the real merits of the case to a contemplation of the wickedness of Atheistic opinions. Hence, according to the usual procedure, Mr Digby Seymour began:

"You are the proprietor of the *National Reformer*, I think?"

Mr BRADLAUGH: I decline to answer that question on the ground that it might make me liable to a criminal prosecution. I am threatened with one at the present moment.

Mr S.: Oh, you state that, do you?

Mr B.: Yes, I do.

Mr S.: I think you hold strong opinions on political subjects as well as on religion?

Mr B.: Well, I hold opinions some of which are similar to those held by Dean Stanley, Mr J. S. Mill, and others.

Mr. S.: Without putting it unfairly, you hold extreme opinions?

Mr B.: I hold opinions held by a great many of the first men in Europe.

Mr S.: And I suppose, as you have refused, I must not ask you any question as to the contents of this *National Reformer* (holding one in his hand). May I ask if you think Christianity has a ludicrous aspect?

Mr B.: You may ask, but I shall not answer the question.

Mr S.: Do you know a work called "The Ludicrous Aspects of Christianity"? Is it in your library?

Mr B.: It is not in my library.

Mr S.: Then you think that Christianity has a ludicrous aspect?

Mr B.: I cannot answer that.

Mr S.: At all events, under your eloquent handling, I believe Christianity has been made to assume ridiculous aspects?

Mr B.: I have never written such a pamphlet as you refer to, nor delivered lectures under such a title.

At this point the Judge interfered, and after pointing out that the lectures to be delivered at Mirfield were of a political character, warned Mr Seymour that such questions were unnecessary. "If they were to destroy Mr Bradlaugh's credit I should not object, but there is really no part of his evidence in dispute," he said.

As Mr Bradlaugh had not otherwise sufficient evidence of the lettings of the hall, he was obliged to call the hall-keeper himself. This man, Thomas Balme, was, as might be expected, a very unwilling witness, with a peculiarly defective memory. Having heard him, Mr Justice Mellor came to the conclusion that he really had no authority to let the hall, and that consequently the plaintiff must be non-suited.

Mr Bradlaugh decided to try for a new trial, and applied to Mr Justice Willes at Judges Chambers a few days later that judgment might be stayed until the fifth day of Michaelmas Term, in order to enable him to move the Court of Queen's Bench. Mr Thomas Chitty appeared for the defendants.

When Mr Justice Willes read the receipt, which ran as follows: "Mirfield Town Hall Company, Limited. Mr Charles Bradlaugh have taken the Hall for two nights, November 18th and 19th, for the sum of four guineas. Paid 21st of September 1870. Thomas Balme, Hall-keeper, liabal to damages,"—he said to Mr Bradlaugh, "I shall be very glad if you can make out that the law helps you, for I think your case a very hard one. (Turning to Mr Chitty) With such a receipt and memorandum as this, having paid my four guineas, I should most certainly expect to lecture. It is very hard for the plaintiff so be defeated by the mere statement of your own servant that he had no authority."

Mr Chitty opposed the application. "There is really no good ground shown for a new trial," he said. "Perhaps at this moment no legal ground," replied the Judge, "but a strong suggestion which I am inclined to listen to. This is an application by a plaintiff who will be stopped if I do not aid him, and the circumstances, not ordinary ones, are certainly in his favour."

In the end it was arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should have an opportunity to move, if he could pay £60 into Court within seven days, and on his side my father pledged himself not to trouble the Court unless he was quite satisfied that he could prove that Balme had let the hall on other occasions. I gather that he was unable to get sufficient evidence on this point, for he carried the case no further. The taxed costs of the Mirfield Town Hall Company amounted to £98 7s., and as Mr Bradlaugh was unable to pay this at once an attempt was made to enforce immediate judgment, but this failed, and it was ultimately arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should pay £10 per month. So here was another addition to debt

to the load of an already over-weighted man. The debt incurred in the Devonport trial took him three and a half years to pay. Happily, his own expenditure in this (the Mirfield) case was covered by the subscriptions of his poor friends, and they also ultimately contributed £25 towards the costs of the Hall Company.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PERSONAL.

In our house the year 1870, which was to bring death and sorrow to so many homes, and rage and despair to so many hearts, opened cheerlessly indeed. The outlook for my father was dark and gloomy in the extreme. Overweighted with debt, he seemed to be sinking ever deeper and deeper in financial difficulties. The prosecution of the *National Reformer*, the De Rin and the *Razor* litigation, had each and all left him more or less deeply involved. The great panic of 1866 had dealt him a serious blow from which he vainly attempted to recover; the identification of "C. Bradlaugh, of 23 Great St. Helen's," with "Bradlaugh, the Atheist lecturer," was fatal to business. The spirit of the boycott existed long before Captain Boycott lived to give it his name. People were much too good to do business with an Atheist, and just as the baker's wife took her custom from the boy coal merchant in 1848, so customers of a different class took their business from the City merchant twenty years later.

My father began to despair of making his business succeed under these conditions, and to think seriously of giving up his City life, and of devoting himself to public work. This course would relieve him from the anxieties of two clashing occupations; moreover, as he said, "while prejudice and clamour bring ruin to me as a business man, they can do me no injury as a lecturer and a journalist." *

In addition to all these difficulties—the outcome of his public work—there were others, less serious in some respects, it is true, but far more so in the discredit attaching to them and the anguish they caused. I refer to those home extravagances and home

* *National Reformer*, April 17, 1870.

debts, due to my mother's infirmity, which all helped to pile up the total liabilities to unmanageable figures. In March or April a man was put into possession at Sunderland Villa, and remained there for several weeks. My father felt this bitterly, but his course of conduct was now clear before him, and unhesitatingly decided upon; thus once more we see the pressure of money difficulties directly shaping his path. A few personal words in the *National Reformer* * indicated his resolve: "After five years' severe struggle," he wrote, "so severe, indeed, as to repeatedly endanger my health, I find it is utterly impossible to remain in business in the City in the face of the strong prejudice excited against me on political and religious grounds. I have determined to entirely give up all business, and devote myself to the movement. I have, therefore, taken steps to reduce the personal expenditure of myself and family to the lowest possible point, in order that I may set myself free from liability as early as I can, and I shall be glad now to arrange for week-night lectures in any part of Great Britain."

Hence, when these people, moved by their "political and religious" prejudices, drove Mr Bradlaugh from the City, and prevented him from making a livelihood in the ordinary way of business, they were unconsciously forging a weapon against themselves. Instead of giving a small portion of his time to writing and speaking against Theology, and on behalf of Radicalism and Republicanism, my father henceforth devoted the whole of his life to that work.

In accordance with his determination to reduce his personal expenditure to the lowest point, in the middle of May—before his words could have been read by those to whom they were addressed—my mother, my sister, and myself went to Midhurst, to find a home in my grandfather's little cottage, and my father set aside a modest sum weekly for our board and clothing. My brother remained with Mr John Grant of the Grenadier Guards for tuition, and Mr Bradlaugh himself took two tiny rooms at 3s. 6d. a week, at 29 Turner Street, Commercial Road, in the house of a widow who had been known to our family from her early girlhood. The size and style of these rooms may be guessed from the neighbourhood in which they were situated, and from the weekly rental asked for them. Within a few days or so from our leaving

* May 22, 1870.

London, our household effects at Sunderland Villa were sold, my father retaining a few of the least saleable articles of furniture to supply what was necessary for his two rooms.

Instead of taking the most comfortable bedstead, he took the one which had been used by us little girls, and this was the bed upon which he slept until a year before his death, when I removed it without his knowledge during his absence in India, and put a more comfortable one in its place. Our nursery washstand, a chest of drawers, a writing-table, and half-a-dozen chairs comprised all the furniture he thought necessary for his use. My mother was not allowed to take anything whatever with her beyond our wearing apparel and a few trifles of small actual worth, but which she specially valued. My father's books, of course, he took with him, these, and one other thing which I had almost forgotten. The bedroom and sitting-room at Turner Street communicated, and the walls of both were covered with shelves, except just over the bed-head, which was reserved for the one other treasure brought from home. This was a large canvas painted in oils for Mr Bradlaugh by an artist friend, Emile Girardot. The subject was very simple, being nothing more than a tired hurdy-gurdy boy sleeping in a doorway, with a monkey anxiously watching. Whatever the intrinsic value of the picture might be, to my father it was above all price. He had quite a love for it, and often spoke of it—even in his last illness he talked of it, and wondered where it was, and longed for it, for by that time it had gone out of his hands.

So by the end of May we were all adrift and separated—my father in his small book-lined rooms in the east end of London; my brother Charlie with the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards, wherever it happened to be; my mother, sister, and self vegetating in a Sussex hamlet. But bad as all this was, 1870 held still worse things in store for us. In June my brother was taken ill with a mild attack of scarlatina, of which we knew nothing until he came home to us for his holidays on the 20th of the month. Due precautions had been neglected, and almost immediately after he reached us kidney disease began to manifest itself. From this he died on the 15th July, and he was buried exactly a month from the day on which he came home. The shock of his death was terrible to all of us, and not least so to my father. Although barely eleven years old at his death, Charlie was a lad full

of promise, quick to learn and to comprehend, amiable, honourable, and generous; and of these traits I can recall many little instances. I have a photograph of him taken at the age of seven or eight, and as I look at it I see his eyes gaze out from under his square brow with a wonderfully clear and fearless look.

He was buried on the 20th day of July in Cocking Churchyard, my grandfather's cottage at Cocking Causeway (Midhurst) being in the parish of Cocking. Of course, we had to submit to the Church of England service, for it was before the Burials Act was passed, but the Rev. Drummond Ash was a kindly, courteous gentleman, and he made things as easy as the circumstances would allow. The burial would have taken place at the Brookwood Necropolis had my father been able to afford the expense. As he was not, Charlie was laid perforce in consecrated ground at the foot of the South Down Hills with Christian rites and ceremonies.

The Rev. Theophilus Bennett, a later Rector of Cocking, has stated that his predecessor, Mr Ash, "attended" my brother "in his dying moments." This statement is entirely without foundation; I am not aware that Mr Ash ever saw or spoke with my brother at all, and certainly the only persons present when the boy was dying were my grandmother, my mother, our nurse Kate (who remained with us at her own wish to help nurse him in his illness), my sister, and myself; moreover, Mr Ash was at that time reported to be himself ill and away from home, having left word that if "the little boy at the Causeway should die," all facilities for his funeral were to be given, or some such message.

The telegram bearing the totally unexpected summons to my father to hasten to see his son for the last time was handed to him on the platform at Bury just as he was about to deliver a lecture. I have been told that when he read the words he turned deathly pale, but with that self-control which never failed him in adversity, he rose, and with the least perceptible hesitation, commenced and went through with his lecture. On Tuesday night he received his summons; on Wednesday he was with us, though only to leave again by the early train on Thursday morning. On Friday the boy died, and on that same day and the next my father had to be in the law-courts as witness in a case relating to the Naples Colour Company.* His grief for the loss of his son was intense,

* This was an action to try the right of the Sheriff of Surrey to distrain upon the Colour Machinery at Hatcham. Baron dos Santos, of the Romish

but he shut it up in his heart, and rarely afterwards mentioned the name of his boy, of whom he had been so proud.

Legation, had wished to trade in Naples colour in England, under the name of the Company of which Mr Bradlaugh was Secretary. Mr Bradlaugh had bought and paid for the machinery to grind the colours before they could be sold, and he claimed to carry on the business until Baron dos Santos should purchase the things off him. Obliged to raise money in 1868, when he was contesting Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh borrowed £600 from Mr Javal upon the machinery, and he in turn raised some money from the Advana Company. Before this last had been repaid the defendants seized the machinery under an execution judgment as creditors of the Naples Colour Company. Mr Bradlaugh was the principal witness, and the newspaper report notes that he requested to be allowed to affirm instead of being sworn, but said that he should take the oath, if his lordship insisted upon it. He was allowed to affirm, and at the conclusion of the case the jury decided that the machinery belonged to Mr Bradlaugh, and therefore gave a verdict for the plaintiffs.

CHAPTER XXX.

LECTURES—1870-1871.

The early part of the seventies was a period of much Freethought and Republican activity in England; everywhere in the Freethought ranks there was movement and life. In spite of the persistent refusal of Messrs W. H. Smith & Son to sell the *National Reformer*, its circulation was largely increasing, and in 1870 it was read in the four quarters of the globe. In England all sorts of devices were resorted to damage the sale; country news-agents refused, like Messrs Smith & Son, to sell it, or said they were unable to obtain it, or quietly returned it "out of print"; contents bills were no sooner posted in some towns than they were torn down, and on occasion the police employed themselves, or were employed, in this work. At Scarborough * evidence was obtained against Police Constable Charlton, and legal proceedings were commenced. At the last moment, however, the sum of 2s. was paid into Court, together with costs proportionate to the summons, and Mr Bradlaugh, overwhelmed with other work and worries, contented himself with this acknowledgment of the wrongdoing and did not pursue the matter further.

The high pressure at which my father had been living had so undermined his health that for a long time he was a martyr to acute neuralgia; still, notwithstanding this, in the early part of the year he was lecturing once or twice a week, and as soon as he was able to extricate himself from the City his lecture list grew tremendously. In the month of July alone—a month which, as we have seen, brought its own peculiar burdens—he gave as many as twenty-six lectures. I find it noted that during this last half-year he delivered as many as one hundred and seventy lectures, in forty-nine of which the proceeds were insufficient to cover his railway expenses,

* May 1870.

and in the case of twenty more, although his railway was covered, there was not enough to clear his hotel bill.

Except in one or two very special cases* Mr Bradlaugh never took a fee for his lectures. He took whatever surplus remained from the admission money, after paying all expenses of the meeting. He made this arrangement originally so that no town or village might be hindered from promoting lectures on account of the expense. "Large and small places," he said, "will be visited indifferently." A charge for admission was always made at his lectures, usually a small one, varying from twopence or threepence to a shilling. He objected very strongly to "free" lectures and collections. Of course he now, as ever, very often gave away the proceeds of his lectures. His audiences were frequently very large, especially in places where he was known. He happened to make a note of the numbers who came to hear him on the Sundays in January 1871, and he records that on the Sunday evenings alone he had audiences whose total numbers reached six thousand, and at three morning lectures there was a total of two thousand five hundred.

Halls were often refused to him, although not quite so frequently as in former years. In 1870 the Stratford Town Hall was refused by the West Ham Local Board, and for many years he had great difficulty in obtaining a hall in Stratford. The St. Mary's Hall, Coventry, was refused to him by the Mayor of Coventry for a lecture on "The Land and the People," and the Mirfield Town Hall after it had been duly engaged for two political lectures was closed against him by the proprietors.† An exactly similar case occurred at Glossop a year and a half later. The Town Hall was taken for a political lecture, and at almost the last moment, after the lapse of several weeks, the Council instructed that the money paid for the hire should be returned. The effect of this was to produce a much greater and more widespread excitement and discussion than half a dozen lectures would have done.

It was in 1870 that Mr Bradlaugh began that close scrutiny of the history of our reigning family which resulted in the

* These cases were so rare that the only one I can actually recall is that of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society.

† See p. 294.

publication of his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," a little book which created some considerable stir both when it was first published in 1871,* and when an edition partly revised by Mr Bradlaugh was brought out after his death. The "Impeachment" has been widely read both here and in America, where it was reprinted. Besides writing upon the Brunswick family, Mr Bradlaugh used to take the history of one or more of the members of it as a subject for his lecture, and taught many a good Republican lesson whilst discoursing upon the exceptional virtues of "George, Prince of Wales," or "the four Georges." A friend has told me an amusing story concerning one of these lectures. My father had promised to speak one Saturday evening at Sowerby Bridge on "George, Prince of Wales." By some curious blunder the friends who were making the arrangements placarded the town with the subject announced as "Albert Edward, Prince of Wales." The effect of this was to cause a large number of police to be drafted into the town, and a Government shorthand reporter was sent down from London, travelling by the same train as my father. The hall was, of course, crowded, but whether the audience were disappointed when my father explained the mistake in the subject of the lecture, my informant did not say. In any case I expect that the officials who had been so busy in preparing for treason and riot, and found only history and order, felt that the proceedings had turned out rather flat. At Stourbridge, where Mr Bradlaugh was invited † by some "gentlemen of Republican tendencies" to discourse upon the "House of Brunswick," Lord Lyttleton, as Lord Lieutenant of the county, tried to induce the Stourbridge Town Commissioners to withdraw from their agreement to let the Corn Exchange for the lectures, but his efforts were in vain.

---

* At the end of 1872 Mr John Baker Hopkins made a violent attack upon Mr Bradlaugh for his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick" in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. A reply to this from my father's pen appeared in the January (1873) Number, but there was such an outcry raised in the press at the insertion in the "Gentleman's" Magazine of an article by "Mr Bradlaugh of Whitechapel and Hyde Park respectively" that Mr John Hatton, the editor, felt so far obliged to defend himself as to say a word in favour of free discussion. He further atoned for his sins by allowing Mr J. B. Hopkins to return to his attack in the following month.

† December 1871.

His Lordship seems to have been a little angry, and it was even rumoured that he went so far as to tell the magistrates that he would have Mr Bradlaugh arrested for treason. He succeeded in raising such a scare that a large extra body of police were drafted into the town under the order of the Chief Constable of the county. There were two lectures, and Colonel Carmichael, the Chief Constable, was present at both, but, as I gather from the printed reports, the meetings were large, the audiences delighted, and of both the end "was peace."

In the summer of 1871 Mr Bradlaugh went one Monday evening to Newton Abbot to address a meeting in the New Vegetable Market, used then for a public gathering for the first time. The subject on which he was to speak was "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle." Very few of the tradesmen in the town would consent to expose bills of the lecture, and several who did display them at first took them from their windows at the advice of the "respectable and pious," and in the end only two showed the announcements. Two gentlemen who were present at the meeting—one as a reporter for the local paper, the other, one of the five Radicals who invited Mr Bradlaugh to Newton—have given a vivid account of a little incident which enlivened the evening's proceedings. It appears that in 1871 a certain Mr John George Stuart was the High Bailiff of the town. "This gentleman," I am told, "was a Methodist, and had at that time two sons who were studying for the ministry. He was also a distinguished boxer, and he had the reputation of being the most formidable wielder of the gloves in England." Mr Stuart, supported by two friends, "attended the meeting with the avowed intention of obstructing Mr Bradlaugh. As soon as Mr Bradlaugh began to speak, Mr Stuart commenced to disturb the meeting. Mr Bradlaugh repeatedly requested him to reserve his criticisms until the close of the lecture, when an opportunity would be offered him of speaking from the platform. But Mr Stuart continued to shout his opinions upon Mr Bradlaugh's Atheism, although the lecture was on a purely political question. At last Mr Bradlaugh said that unless the interruptions ceased, he should be compelled to act as his own chairman, and to request Mr Stuart to leave the building. As Mr Stuart and his friends would not desist from shouting, Mr Bradlaugh stepped from the platform, walked up to the athlete, and carried him to the door with ease.

At the doorway Mr Stuart spread his arms and held the jambs, but Mr White, who was acting as doorkeeper, pushed one of his hands aside, and Mr Bradlaugh set the disturber down in the street. None of Mr Stuart's friends offered the least resistance, and the crowd, which was made up of hostile as well as friendly hearers, loudly cheered Mr Bradlaugh's unceremonious ejectment of the local hero of the 'noble art.'" The friends to whom I am indebted for the foregoing say further that Mr Stuart's pride was brought very low by this episode, and that he rarely appeared afterwards among the former admirers of his prowess.

In the course of my father's lecturing experiences, he several times met with local "champions," as defenders of the faith. A few months later, at Sowerby Bridge, a local champion wrestler entered the room during the delivery of his lecture and commenced abusing him loudly. The man was spoken to several times, but he would neither remain quiet, nor quit the place. Mr Bradlaugh was at length obliged to leave the platform and put him out *vi et armis*. Put out at one door, he reappeared at another; but this time the audience took the matter into their own hands, and kept him out. Another "champion" conducted a serious disturbance at Congleton, but of that later.

In the month of March (1871) Dr Magee, then Bishop of Peterborough, delivered three discourses in the Norwich Cathedral in "vindication and establishment of the Christian faith," and "directed against modern forms of infidelity." The Freethinkers of Norwich, anxious to give these discourses the attention which the high position and high reputation of the speaker demanded, had asked Mr Bradlaugh to come to Norwich to represent them on the occasion of the Bishop's discourses. This he consented to do, and attended all the lectures, but—as perhaps it is superfluous to say—he was not allowed to make any remark upon them. It was however desired that he should make some reply in the town where the lectures had been delivered, at least, if not in the Cathedral to Dr Magee himself, but it was not easy to obtain the use of a hall for the purpose. A circuit of the town was made in the vain endeavour to hire a building, and it was only after considerable difficulty that the Free Library Hall was at last procured. As my father truly said, "the approved mode of encountering modern infidelity seemed to be that of free speech for the Church advocate, and gagged mouth for the pleader on

behalf of heresy." * In the Norwich Free Library Hall he delivered three lectures in reply to Dr Magee. These he afterwards published, together with the Bishop's discourses; and as a statement of the cases for and against Christianity and for and against Freethought, coming from such representative men as the late learned and eloquent Archbishop of York and Mr Bradlaugh, they cannot fail to be of special interest.

During the autumn my father gave a lecture on behalf of the London Republican Club, and upon this speech all sorts of rumours were founded, not indeed upon what my father actually did say, but upon what his detractors chose to believe he said. Mr Disraeli had recently stated at an agricultural meeting at Hughenden † that it could not be concealed that Her Majesty was "physically and morally incapacitated from performing her duties," and my father took these words as the text of his lecture for the Republican Club in London. His speech, which was unusually long, occupying close upon an hour and a half, was a most careful recital of the duties of the Monarch and the rights and duties of the people, with special reference to the course pursued during the periods when George III. was officially declared incapable of performing the royal functions. Shorthand writers were present, and this address, or parts of it, was telegraphed all over the United Kingdom, to America and to the Continent. Much of it appeared in the American and Continental press of the next day or so, and after a short interval distorted accounts of it were to be heard of in most parts of England. There was one passage in particular upon which a whole mountain of mis-

---

* "Christianity in Relation to Freethought Scepticism and Faith: three discourses by the Bishop of Peterborough, with special replies by Charles Bradlaugh."

A similar case in a small way happened at Deptford in April 1873. A Rev. Dr Miller had delivered some addresses in the Deptford Lecture Hall against "unbelievers," and it was proposed that Mr Bradlaugh should reply to these addresses in the same place. He had frequently spoken in the Deptford Lecture Hall before, but when the Deptford Freethinkers sought to engage it for a lecture in answer to Dr Miller, the Committee refused to let the hall for that purpose. This intolerance the *Kentish Mercury* applauded by referring to it in bold type as "noble conduct."

† September 26, 1871.

representation and worse * was afterwards based. In the course of his address Mr Bradlaugh had said: "Many of you are aware that I have lately repeatedly declared my most earnest desire that the present Prince of Wales should never dishonour this country by becoming its King. My opinion is that if four or five years of political education are allowed to continue in this land, that worthy representative of an unworthy race will never be King of England. My thorough conviction is that neither his intelligence, nor his virtues, nor his political ability, nor his military capacity—great as all these are for a member of his family—can entitle him to occupy the throne of Great Britain. I am equally opposed to his ever being Regent of England. I trust that he may never sit on the throne or lounge under its shadow."

Of course my father showed himself much too sanguine as to the time necessary for the political education of this country towards a Republican form of Government; but those who recall the seeming vigour of the Republican movement in England during the early seventies will know that he was not without excuse for his hopeful views. In any case, one would have thought that his expression in regard to the Prince of Wales was strong enough to have been dealt with by English Monarchists as he made it; but instead, it was perverted into an "impudent and disloyal announcement that he and a certain number of his friends would take care that the Prince should never come to the throne." † A very different thing indeed to the "desire" my father had uttered. The effect of all this was to raise such a tremendous journalistic storm against him, that a few weeks later he wrote: "As to the hostile attacks, they are during the past fortnight so numerous that I have not space even to catalogue them. Many journals call for my prosecution." One paper, a century or so behind the times, recommended a pillory and flogging.

A curious little incident which occurred ten or twelve days after Mr Bradlaugh's lecture helped to strengthen the outcry against him, especially on the part of Conservative speakers and the Conservative press. On the 28th of October Mr Gladstone addressed a vast meeting of his constituents on Blackheath. He spoke for two hours, defending the conduct of his colleagues and

* See Chapter ix., vol. ii.

† Earl Fortescue at the King's Nympton Farmers' Club, November 1871.

himself since they had taken office three years ago. During this important speech he quoted, from what he called a "questionable book," these lines, which he said contained "much good sense"—

> "People throughout the land,
> Join in one social band,
> And save yourselves;
> If you would happy be,
> Free from all slavery,
> Banish all knavery,
> And save yourselves."

This sentiment was greeted with deafening applause by the thousands listening with eager ears to every word that fell from the Prime Minister. But the epithet bestowed upon the book whence he drew this example of the "good sense" it contained, roused a perfect frenzy of curiosity. Literary Conservatives imagined that Mr A. C. Swinburne was the author, and the dismay exhibited was almost beyond description when it was discovered—by the horrified *Scotsman*, I believe—that Mr Gladstone's "questionable book" was the "Secularists' Manual of Songs and Ceremonies," edited by Austin Holyoake and Charles Watts, with a preface by Charles Bradlaugh. The press comments upon the discovery are amusing to read, especially as Mr Bradlaugh was often made in some way responsible, not merely for the verse, but for Mr Gladstone's quoting it on Blackheath. Mr Giffard, Q.C., was amongst those who thought it "an outrage" that such a book should have been so quoted by the Prime Minister of England. The publisher was indictable, said he wrathfully, and the writer would have been sent to prison in the good old days when the Christian religion was more thought of. * But neither he nor any one else moved to prefer the indictment.

---

* Address to the Cardiff Constitutional Association.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FRANCE—THE WAR.

When hostilities were declared between France and Germany in 1870, Mr Bradlaugh did not take sides with either nation; he entirely and unreservedly condemned the war. He and his friends kept clear of the war fever which seemed coursing through the blood of most people. "All the evil passions of Europe are aroused," wrote Austin Holyoake, "and even children gloat over the narratives of slaughter where thousands perish. The soldier, instead of the schoolmaster, has become the foremost man, and Rage, Revenge, and Murder are the gods of public idolatry." Not a word would Mr Bradlaugh or his colleagues say to commiserate the "insulted honour of France," not a word to glorify the triumphant arms of Germany.

But my father was not neutral because he was unmoved. His sympathies were always strongly with the French people, but these very sympathies made him bitterly antagonistic to the French Emperor. In the middle of August he replied to a correspondent: "You do not understand my position. I regard Napoleon as one of the greatest amongst modern scoundrels, and Bismarck as a crafty diplomatist striving to make a great German Empire under Prussia. I love Bismarck so little that when the Reform League wrote him an address, I refused to sign it. I hope to see a German republic, and I believe I shall, but this war will postpone it. I deeply regret the evoking the 'nationality' madness in France, for I fear that many of our brave Republican friends will be killed in striving to save, as they think, the flag of France from disgrace."

On the 4th of September was declared the third French Republic. The *National Reformer* was quick to give it welcome, but my father himself was away in the provinces just then, lecturing and debating with scarce a day's respite, and so overwrought with much speaking in heated rooms and much travelling

in wet and changeable weather, that his health seemed on the point of breaking down. At Leigh he had lectured on two successive nights in a wooden theatre, admirably adapted to give free admittance to every gust of the damp night wind. On the morning (Sunday) following these lectures he had left at six o'clock to go to Darwen. By that time his voice was reduced to a hoarse whisper, and the Darwen friend who met him looked grave when he saw how ill he seemed, especially when my father announced his intention of going to bed until the lecture hour. Three lectures he gave that day—morning, afternoon, and evening—with an hour's discussion after the morning lecture, but his appearance made such an impression upon his Lancashire friends that they wrote him an address of sympathy.

Ill-health, overwork, financial worries, and domestic sorrows made a heavy burden to carry; still, notwithstanding all this, he made the opportunity to write his sympathy with Republican France.

"First," he said, "that there may be no mistake, I throw in my lot with France—Republican France. While Louis Napoleon reigned at the Tuileries the memories of December were too bloody, nineteen-year-old hatreds too bitter, to let me even be just to any cause he led. A perjured liar, a cold-blooded murderer, a heartless coward, a paltry trickster, a dishonourable cheat, all this was Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. I was, therefore, well inclined to Germany from my utter hatred of the imperial demoralisation of France. But now, when events are moving so rapidly that perhaps ere this sees the light all may be changed, it is worth while to ask, Was Prussia guiltless in the war? and I answer, No! Bismarck and Prussian armies are evidence on this side. Bismarck using craft of a higher order than Napoleonic scoundrelism, and moved by a broader ambition than the mere embezzlement of national funds or personal aggrandisement, has outwitted Napoleon; but the English people, while repudiating with fullest indignation the wicked and most monstrous declaration of war, cannot forget that by-divine-right-ruling and for-victory-God-thanking William is as much a detester of popular rights as was Napoleon himself. . . . . At this moment the world's most fearful curse is in its armies, and our cry is Peace."

It was only just, he said, that the French Republic should pay some penalty for the previous folly of the nation, and if Prussia

exacted ever so heavy a war indemnity in money, it should be cheerfully paid. But he spoke most strenuously against the surrender of Alsace and Lorraine. To Germany he appealed for peace "while yet the glory is yours—if indeed it be glory to kill and maim, scorch and scathe, and this at the cost of as many killed and wounded, scorched and scathed, on your own side." Last of all he appealed to the peoples of England, France, and Germany to unite for peace; if they were earnest, he wrote, they must be obeyed, and their "glorious desire must be conceded."

This article was in print on the 14th September; and as he was at breakfast at his Turner Street lodgings one morning, three days later, my father received a somewhat startling visit from a French lady, at that time well known in French and English political circles. Madame la Vicomtesse de Brimont Brassac was a lady of great beauty and great persuasive powers, although in her errand that September morning she had no occasion for the use of either one or the other. She came to my father with the idea of persuading him to undertake the attempt to create a feeling in favour of France amongst the English masses; this was a work after his own heart, and one indeed to which he had already set his hand in the article to which I have just referred. This interview had for its immediate result a succession of public meetings, held both in London and the provinces, in favour of France and Peace. The first, held at the Hall of Science on Monday the 19th, was, despite the short notice, attended by upwards of 1400 persons. Through Madame de Brimont my father learned that Lord Granville was moving against the French Republic, and was in favour of replacing the Emperor in Paris. Friends everywhere were urged to counteract Lord Granville's efforts by striving to make a living public opinion in favour of France and Peace. At this first demonstration two addresses were agreed to: one to Mr Gladstone, praying him to use his high office "actively in favour of peace," for, it was urged, "it will be to England's lasting shame if every possible effort be not made to prevent further carnage;" the second was sent to the French Government of National Defence and to the French people, offering congratulations on the position taken by Jules Favre, and tendering deep and heartfelt sympathy to the nation in its sorrow.

In co-operation with Dr Congreve, Prof. Beesly, and other prominent Positivists, Mr Bradlaugh organised a series of meetings

in London and the provinces. One at St James's Hall on the 24th was a great success. The hall was densely crowded by an enthusiastic meeting, which was addressed by Dr Congreve, Prof. Beesly, Sir Henry Hoare, M.P., Mr George Odger, Colonel Dickson, and others. The addresses to Mr Gladstone and to the French Nation were voted unanimously, and a resolution moved by Prof. Beesly, calling upon the English Government to give an immediate and frank recognition of the French Republic, met with the utmost enthusiasm. The two addresses were sent for signature to thirty of the largest towns in England and Scotland, and in two days forty thousand signatures were obtained.

Just before the commencement of the proceedings at St James's Hall an incident occurred that admitted of an extremely simple explanation, but which the Tory press endeavoured to turn to the discredit of the "France and Peace" Committee. A little while before the speakers were expected on the platform, the gas, which had been wavering somewhat uncertainly for a few minutes, suddenly went out, leaving the hall in complete darkness. As may be imagined, there was great dismay, and with it all the dangers of a panic. A gentleman who acted as steward at the meeting tells me that the light was hardly out before Mr Bradlaugh's voice was heard crying, "Lead me to the front; lead me to the front!" This he and another friend succeeded in doing. Once at the front of the platform, he says that my father began to speak, and the audience, recognising his voice, gave a ringing cheer. He told the people that the gas would be relighted as soon as possible, and entreated the people to keep their seats. "He kept speaking for about fifteen minutes, when the gas was re-lit, and all danger past. The thought of what would have happened had not Mr Bradlaugh been there gives one an uncomfortable sensation. A panic under such circumstances would have been terrible, but the way the people responded to the desire of Mr Bradlaugh to keep their seats, and to keep quiet until all was put right, was extraordinary." Not less extraordinary was the explanation suggested by the *Observer*. Said the veracious chronicler of this high-class Sunday paper: "This *contretemps* created a good deal of speculation, and the general opinion was that the Committee and the proprietors had been unable to come to terms, and that the latter, in order to secure their money, turned out the gas." From this it would seem that to jeopardise the lives

of thousands of people* (without counting certain damage to the building) would have been a mere trifle to the proprietors compared with the possible loss of a few pounds. It must have been quite a shock to the originators of so diabolical an idea to learn that the accident was an accident pure and simple, and due to a matter so ordinary and commonplace as a defect in the water meter which supplied the gas to the hall.

The St James's Hall meeting was immediately followed by forty-eight others, and in every case the size of the meeting was restricted only by the capacity of the building in which it was held. It may be asked, But what was the outcome of all these meetings, what was their practical value? In 1873 Mr Bradlaugh gave the answer to this in the pages of his *Autobiography*. "They exercised," he said, "some little effect on the public opinion of this country, but unfortunately the collapse on the part of France was so complete, and the resources commanded by Bismarck and Moltke so vast, that, except as expressing sympathy, the results were barren."

Sympathy, however, is often very welcome; his efforts to help the cause of Peace were warmly received in France, and without any previous communication having passed between them, the Republican Government at Tours sent him the following letter:—

"RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.—LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ.

"Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale.

"TOURS, *le* 21 *Octobre* 1870.

"MONSIEUR,—Les Membres du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, réunis en délégation à Tours, après avoir pris connaissance du magnifique discours que vous avez prononcé au meeting d'Edimbourg, tiennent à honneur de vous remercier chalereusement du noble concours que vous apportez à la cause de la France et de l'Europe dans votre pays.

"Vous ne ménagez, Monsieur, ni vos efforts, ni votre temps, pour éclairer l'opinion publique depuis longtemps si puissante dans le Royaume-Uni. Nous nous plaisons à croire que tant de dévoue-

* The *Observer's* own report stated: "At first there seemed to be an inclination to rush to the doors, which might have led to great sacrifice of life.

ment finira par convaincre l'Europe, sur laquelle l'opinion Brittanique exerce une si legitime influence, que la France lutte aujourd'hui pour la plus juste des causes, la défense de son honneur et de son territoire.

"Nous ne saurions trop le redire : la guerre actuelle a été entreprise contre la volonté de la nation française : la Prusse en la continuant combat sans droit et pour la seule satisfaction d'une ambition dont l'Europe ne tardera pas à sentir les ruineux effets.

"Remerciez en notre nom, ceux de vos généreux compatriotes qui vous écoutent et vous acclament dans ces magnifiques réunions publiques que nous leur envions, où se débattent les plus grands intérêts du monde.

"L'accueil qui vous est fait partout, nous est un sûr garant des sympathies du peuple Anglais pour la France et ses institutions nouvelles.

"Nous ne faisons aucun doute que de cette incessante propagande à laquelle vous vous êtes devoué, ne sortent bientôt la lumière qui doit dessiller tous les yeux et le triomphe prochain de la justice et de la civilisation.

"Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de notre très haute considération.

"Les Membres de la délégation du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, réunis a Tours :

"Leon Gambetta. Ad. Crémieux.
L. Fournichon. Al. Glais Bizoin." *

---

* "The French Republic.—liberty, equality, fraternity.
"Government of National Defence.

"Tours, 21*st October* 1870.

"Sir,—The Members of the Government of National Defence, assembled in delegation at Tours, after having become acquainted with the magnificent speech which you delivered at the meeting at Edinburgh, have the honour to thank you most warmly for the noble help which you bring to the cause of France and of Europe in your country.

"You do not spare, Sir, either your efforts or your time in the attempt to enlighten public opinion—for so long all-powerful in the United Kingdom. We take pleasure in believing that so much devotion will end by convincing Europe, upon which British opinion exercises so legitimate an influence, that France fights to-day for the most just of all causes—the defence of her honour and of her territory.

"We cannot too often repeat it : the war itself was undertaken against the

To this letter are appended the following lines written in September 1871 by Monsieur Emanuel Arago, Member of the Provisional Government of September 4 :—

* "En lisant cette lettre, j'éprouve très vivement la regret de n'avoir pu, enfermé dans Paris, joindre ma signature a celles de mes collègues de la délégation de Tours. M. Bradlaugh est, et sera toujours dans la République, notre concitoyen.

"Emanuel Arago." *

About the same time (October 1870) M. Tissot, the Chargé d' Affaires of France in England, wrote him :—

"Je viens de lire avec un extrême intérêt le compte rendu du meeting de Newcastle. La cause de la France et de la paix ne pouvait être remise entre de meilleures mains et plaidée par une voix plus éloquente. Laissez moi vous exprimer une fois de plus, Monsieur, tous mes sentiments de reconnaissance pour votre généreuse initiative, et y joindre l'assurance de ma haute considération et de ma profonde estime. Ch. Tissot." †

---

will of the French nation ; Prussia, in continuing it, fights without justice, and solely for the satisfaction of an ambition of which Europe will not be slow to feel the ruinous effects.

"Thank, in our names, those of your generous compatriots who listen to you, and who applaud you in these magnificent public assemblies—which we envy them—where the greatest interests of the world are debated.

"The welcome which meets you everywhere is to us a sure guarantee of the sympathies of the English people for France and her new institutions.

"We have no doubt that from this incessant propaganda, to which you have devoted yourself, will soon come the light which should undeceive all eyes, as well as the triumph of justice and civilisation.

"Kindly receive, Sir, the expression of our highest consideration.

"Members of the delegation of the Government of National Defence, assembled at Tours :

"Leon Gambetta. Ad. Crémieux.
L. Fournichon. Al. Glais Bizoin."

* "In reading this letter, I feel a keen regret that, shut up in Paris, I was unable to add my signature to those of my colleagues in the Tours delegation. In the Republic Mr Bradlaugh is, and always will be, our fellow-citizen.

"Emanuel Arago."

† "I have just read with extreme interest the report of the meeting at Newcastle. The cause of France and of Peace could not be in better hands, or pleaded by a more eloquent voice. Let me once more express to you,

At a crowded meeting held at the Hall of Science early in the following year Mr Bradlaugh was still denouncing the war in unmeasured terms. "There never was a war," said he, "more unjustifiable, more wicked, more insane, than this which France, as misrepresented by her Emperor, had declared against Germany." This the *Echo* condemned as "Whitechapel style," and loftily asserted that the English people would decline to accept "Iconoclast" as the representative of France and her sufferings. But after other immense gatherings at the Beaumont Institute, the Eastern Hall, Poplar, and the St James's Hall, there was a notable alteration in its tone. An extract from its report of the St James's Hall meeting held five days later makes a rather amusing contrast to its former unqualified condemnation. Said the *Echo* on this occasion of my father:—

"While Professor Beesly was opening the meeting, a tall man with a remarkably pleasant face, a little spoilt by a self-sufficient look, or, if we are really to describe it, a certain consciousness of power, had entered the room and received a perfect ovation of applause. This was Mr Bradlaugh, *alias* 'Iconoclast,' for whom the audience kept calling whenever the speaker for the time being grew tedious. . . . . We know more of Mr Bradlaugh than we wish. Last night, however, he hid the cloven hoof. His speech might have been that of Bishop Atterbury. Not an irreverent expression, not an ill-judged word escaped him. Mr Frederic Harrison speaks almost as badly as Mr Bradlaugh writes. Mr Bradlaugh speaks almost as well as even Mr Harrison writes. There was a sense of power about the man. His audience hung upon his lips; his speech was a success and well delivered. He is a master of oratory, and a master of action; his voice is powerful, rich, and almost musical. And after he had swayed the meeting as he chose for nearly half an hour, the huge crowd broke up, after several vain attempts to start the Marseillaise."

Amongst those who stood on the St James's Hall platform that night were George Odger, Lloyd Jones, George Howell, and Captain Maxse, who, together with Professor Beesly and Frederic Harrison, joined their voices to my father's to plead for the recognition of the French Republican Government and against the dismemberment of France. This series of meetings was held

---

sir, all my feelings of gratitude for your generous initiative, and join to it the assurance of my high consideration and profound esteem.

"Ch. Tissot."

in consequence of the announcement that the European powers were to assemble in conference in London, and it was anxiously desired to impress upon the English Government the duty of making the question of peace between France and Prussia a matter for the consideration of the Plenipotentiaries. It had been hoped and expected that Jules Favre would come to London to take part in the conference, and Mr Bradlaugh was invited to meet him at the Embassy. A demonstration had been agreed upon to honour his arrival, and it was characteristic of my father that he urged those of his friends who prepared to take part in it not to make it a mere party demonstration; he begged them to avoid, and to try to persuade others to avoid, the use of flags calculated to insult Prussia or to cause bitterness of feeling in the minds of Germans. A great assembly of earnest, orderly men and women to greet the representative of Republican France would have weight; "bands and banners," he said, "are needless." Jules Favre, however, was unable to get to London; and in the absence of any appointed French representative to the Conference, Lord Granville conferred with Monsieur Charles Tissot both before and after the meeting of the Plenipotentiaries. A letter which my father received from Monsieur Tissot just at this time will once more show with what warmth his efforts to serve Republican France were received by foremost Frenchmen :—

"LONDRES, 4 *Février* 1871.

"MON CHER MONSIEUR BRADLAUGH,—Aucune sottise, aucune maladresse ne peuvent m'étonner de la part de Mr R.* Mais j'avoue que j'ai senti vivement et que je ne lui pardonnerai jamais cette à laquelle vous faites allusion. Je me demande comme vous s'il n'est pas devenu fou.

"Quant à moi, mon cher ami, je ne puis que constater ici, comme je l'ai déjà fait, comme je le ferai en toute occasion, la dette que nous avons contracté envers vous. Vous nous avez donné votre temps, votre activité, votre éloquence, votre âme, la meilleure partie de vous-même en un mot. La France, que vous avez été seule à défendre, ne l'oubliera jamais.

"Je n'ai aucune nouvelle de Bordeaux, ni de Paris outre celles que vous avez pu lire dans les journaux. Nous allons voir ce que

* M. Reitlinger, "le Secretaire particulier," of M. Jules Favre, is, I believe, the person here referred to.

fera l'Assemblée, ce qu'elle decidera—et nous agirons, s'il y a lieu en conséquence.—Au revoir, cher et excellent ami. Je vous envoie toute mon affection. CH. TISSOT." *

When the French elections took place in February 1871, Mr Bradlaugh was one of the candidates nominated by the city of Paris. I am under the impression that this was done without his wishes being in any way consulted, but the very proposal of his name—testifying, as it to some extent did, the honour in which he was held in Paris—roused scorn and anger at home. The editor of a Scotch paper, † in writing a leader on the elections, relieved his feelings by saying: "'Bradlaugh, English Republican,' figures in the list among the motley crew; but what number of votes were polled for this cosmopolitan patriot, who would have been a dumb dog in a French Parliament, has not transpired." As the "motley crew" included such honoured names as those of Garibaldi, Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, and Victor Schœlcher, it was a distinction to be placed beside them; but why, asked my father, should it be assumed that he would be dumb? "Thomas Paine," he added, "who did not speak French, was not a 'dumb dog' when he pleaded for the life of Louis XVI."

---

* "London, 4th February 1871.

"MY DEAR MR BRADLAUGH,—No folly, no stupidity, on the part of M. R. can astonish me. But I avow that I have felt keenly, and that I will never forgive him this to which you make allusion. Like you, I ask myself whether he has not gone mad.

"As to myself, my dear friend, I can but acknowledge here, as I have done already, and as I shall do on every occasion, the debt that we have contracted towards you. You have given your time, your energy, your eloquence, your mind—in a word, the best part of yourself. France, whom you alone have defended, will never forget it.

"I have no news from Bordeaux or from Paris, other than that which you have been able to read in the papers. We shall see what the Assembly will do, what it will decide, and if opportunity arises we shall act accordingly.—*Au revoir*, dear and excellent friend. I send all my affection.

"CH. TISSOT."

† *North British Daily Mail.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COMMUNE, AND AFTER.

During the Commune my father found himself in a position of extreme difficulty. His heart was with the men who had been driven by most frightful suffering to wild words and still wilder deeds. Some of the oldest and the best amongst his French friends were playing their parts in the tragedies daily enacted in Paris; some, like the amiable Gustave Flourens—who has been described by Mr Washburne, then United States minister, as a "young scholar," and one of "the most accomplished of the agitators and revolutionists"—were laying down their lives; others, like those kindly and learned brothers, Elie and Elysée Reclus, were sacrificing their liberties. My father's whole being throbbed in sympathy with these men; but sympathise as he might, his reason could not commend, and he remained sadly silent, unable to approve, but refusing to condemn.

This feeling of standing aside whilst so many old and dear friends were risking life and liberty was torture to a man of his temperament, and when an opportunity occurred for active help on his part he welcomed it with joy. This opportunity came in the form of a request from some of the French leaders that he should act as intermediary between the Government of M. Thiers and the Commune. As a foreigner and a known friend of France, it was hoped that his intervention might be possible, and might lead to good results.

The terms of peace which he was empowered to propose to M. Thiers were:—

(1.) Acceptance of the principle of Republican Government. A condition rendered absolutely necessary by the intrigues of the Legitimists and the Orleanists, who were striving to place the crown on the head of the Comte de Chambord, with succession to the Comte de Paris.

(2.) Absolute and unconditional amnesty for all political offences.

(3.) Election by the people of the Chief Executive power of the Republic. Hostilities were to be suspended during the election, and disarmament to follow directly the result was known.

When this commission reached Mr Bradlaugh, he had just set out on a course of lectures in Scotland; but with his heart full of hope that this might perhaps be the means of staying the terrible bloodshed, and the tragedies then taking place in France, he determined to allow nothing to delay him, and, neglecting his engagements, immediately left Edinburgh for London. In the columns of the *National Reformer* he himself told how his errand was frustrated and his journey prevented.

On reaching Calais, after a somewhat rough passage, his ears were greeted with the "very old cry" of "Passeports, Messieurs!" His passport was produced and his features examined by means of a lantern. The result of this examination was that a few minutes later he was ushered into the grim presence of the Chief of Police, at the station passport office. "At first," related Mr Bradlaugh, "this gentleman was slightly brusque, but concluded with a great display of courtesy. The following discussion, after the Socratic method, took place, all rights of questioning being reserved by the police:—

Chief of the Police: What is your name?

Charles Bradlaugh.

What is your business?

Editor of the *National Reformer*, to report for my journal.

But you are something else besides editor?

A little.

You are one of the members of the International?

I have not that honour.

You make great speeches?

I try.

You presided at a meeting in Hyde Park the other day?

I did not.

I cannot permit you to go to Paris; your presence there would be too dangerous.

You do me too much honour to attribute to me so much influence.

The Chief of the Police then took down a book in which

'Charles Bradlaugh' appeared in good bold characters, with about twenty lines opposite in writing, which, being very small, I could not read. He then said: 'I have orders to arrest you. I must send you to the Sub-Prefect at Boulogne.'"

After being permitted to send a telegram to Versailles, he was sent off to Boulogne in charge of an officer and two men.

When they arrived there at three in the morning, Boulogne was in total darkness, and then they had about a mile to walk through the driving rain before they reached the Sub-Prefecture. Here, except one man on duty, all appeared to be fast asleep, and M. le Sous-Préfet, apprised of Mr Bradlaugh's arrival, telegraphed to the Government for instructions, refusing to take the case until the morning. My father made up a "bed" of all the chairs he could find, and, still in the close custody of his three guardians, he attempted to pass the time in sleep.

"In the morning," he said, "another and more severe interrogation took place, the Sub-Prefect declaring that I had presided at the Sunday Hyde Park meeting in favour of the Commune; that I had lately been on some revolutionary mission in Prussia; and that I had too much influence to be allowed to go to Paris, where I should be a rallying-point for all dangerous men." Mr Bradlaugh telegraphed to M. Favre, at Versailles, asking in what respect his position had altered since ten weeks earlier, when the Chargé d'Affaires of France, acting under his orders, had tendered him the formal thanks of the French Government for the services he had rendered France. The only answer from the Government was an urgent and imperative order to quit France by the next packet, and a notice that his description had been sent to every railway station in France, with an order for his arrest in the event of his return.

Some months later, after the fall of the Commune, Mr Bradlaugh once more set out for Paris; he was again arrested at Calais, and this time kept prisoner for nearly three days, but was then released and allowed to proceed on his journey. The Commissaire at Calais showed him the order signed by Jules Favre in the previous April. It was emphatic and unequivocal, and ran thus: "Empechez à M. Bradlaugh d'entrer à Paris à tout prix."* This document had apparently never been cancelled, hence Mr Bradlaugh's

* Prevent Mr Bradlaugh from entering Paris, at any price.

second arrest. He was never afterwards hindered on his way to the French capital, although, during the Presidency of Monsieur Thiers, his movements while in Paris were carefully watched. At one time the French authorities assumed that he was masquerading under the name of "Lord Campbell," and the late Lord Campbell and Strathcden, who used to visit at the house of one of my father's friends in Paris, was made quite unhappy by having his movements watched by detectives intended for Mr Bradlaugh. The situation was not without its amusing side, for the particular business upon which Lord Campbell was engaged just then was connected with a marriage he wished to contract with a young French lady.

After the fall of the Commune, London was full of French refugees, many of whom were in poverty and distress. My father did his utmost to help them; he never had money to give away, but he did then what he always did in cases needing pecuniary help—he gave a lecture on their behalf. As his views upon the Commune and the French situation were stated in some detail, I quote a few of the more important passages from a report of his lecture which appeared in his own paper.* He had taken for his subject "French Republicanism;" and after he had dealt with the proclamations of the Republic in 1792 and 1848, and the declaration of the 4th of September, he said:—

"Coming now to the 18th March, and the Commune, the audience would remember that he had in that hall, within a few hours of that date, guarded himself from any expression for or against a movement which appeared then to have but slight confidence in its own leaders, and which had at that date issued no programme. In judging it now, he should judge it more favourably than he did then, trying to avoid alike the exaggeration of its foes, and the indiscriminating endorsement of its friends. It was charged against the men of Paris that they commenced with the assassinations of Generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas—no one could justify these assassinations—but if this were to form ground for the condemnation of the Commune, which disclaimed all participation in the act, with how much more force would other forms of government fall under the same condemnation. Napoleon I. shot the Duc d'Enghien in a ditch; Louis XVIII. shot Marshal

* *National Reformer*, Dec. 24, 1871

Ney; and although, according to the laws of France, capital punishment for political offences had been abolished, the present Government shot Cremieux, Rossel, Ferri, and Bourgeois. He did not justify or excuse the shooting of the Generals; but those who condemned it should see whether their own hands were clean. Of the latest shootings he hardly dared trust himself to speak. M. Thiers had sheltered himself behind a Committee of Pardons, although he feared that it would not be an incorrect guess to hazard that M. Thiers' own influence had hindered any commutation. He considered the 18th March a fatal mistake, a sad blow to the prospects of Republicanism. The Commune asked for the recognition and consolidation of the Republic. But he denied their right to do that by force of arms. They had great provocation, for they had seen Republicanism and Garibaldi insulted at Bordeaux; they knew that the majority of the Chamber were Legitimist and Orleanist, that M. Thiers was Republican only in name, and that Prussia even had been intriguing to put Henry V. on the throne. . . . . But did the Commune initiate the struggle of force? The people of Paris had arms: they had these under the Constitution; they took other arms, to which also they claimed a Constitutional right. It was due to Thiers' weakness and want of capacity that there was any struggle for the cannon on Montmartre, or perhaps at all. He treated the men of Paris as rebels, ignoring that he was the chief of the executive power of a government of rebellion, unendorsed by any vote of the country. He refused all overtures of peace in a manner unworthy a man in his position, and availed himself of iron, steel, famine, and a worse than Prussian bombardment, to drive to frenzy men whom it might have been possible to win at an earlier stage by judicious negotiation. . . . . It was not wonderful that the Commune fell. There was a demon of suspicion, division, and even treachery amongst prominent men, and the terrible demoralisation of the masses, resulting from their position and the long continuance of the previous siege. The wonder was that it stood so long. It was remarkable how free the city was from common crime. There were, in all the Avenue Montaigne, only some two or three concierges left in charge, and all the property was as safe at the end of the siege as at the beginning. The rent of a first floor in one of those houses was £1000 a year, the furniture in proportion. Yet there was no pillage, as there would have been under almost any other

Government, with houses left deserted by their owners. But it was said that the hostages were shot and the buildings were burnt. Now he would be the last to utter one word of justification or defence. He trusted that he might never have to take part in an armed revolution. He believed that if in such a case it was proposed that the public buildings of our city should be destroyed, as those of Paris had been, he would kill without mercy the man who would attempt it. The only thing that could be said was that the men of Paris were ringed round with fire and steel, and all hope of mercy was shut out. To keep them in, Papal Zouaves on the one side, Prussian bayonets on the other. No quarter offered, no generous word of pardon spoken. It could not be wondered if in madness they committed those crimes. It was cruel and cowardly to kill the hostages, but was it for the Versailles troops to reproach the Commune with that? The madness of cruelty had been great on both sides, and the criminality was the greater on the part of the stronger. . . . The cry of vengeance raised [against the *bourgeoisie*] was criminal, it was also a blunder; for if nothing was to be done until the middle class was exterminated, then hope was impossible; it never could be exterminated. There should be no question of war in any political movement between the working and the middle classes. . . . A policy of conciliation as recommended by Talandier was the true one. Each must, if they could not forget the wrongs of yesterday, at any rate remember that fresh blood will not wash out these wrongs. Nations were not to be made up of one class or of another class, but of the people which included all classes. Here [in England] he desired a Republic, and would work for it; but if he could picture, as the only possibility, the walking to its achievement with bloody hands, fire and smoke, and grim visage, he would turn away now, ere it was too late. Republicanism in France would have enough difficulty without class war. Her suddenly increased national debt made a burden not to be borne with impunity. Self-restraint was needed to conquer hate. Generosity on both sides, to forgive alike errors and crimes. Amnesty for yesterday, peace for to-morrow, and then a true Republic might grow in the fair land of France."

A malicious paragraph subsequently went the round of the press stating that the French refugees, on whose behalf this lecture had been delivered, had unanimously refused the proceeds. Of course this statement was utterly devoid of truth; the refugees, far from

refusing the help of their friend, accepted it gratefully, and sent to Mr Bradlaugh a formal vote of thanks and an official receipt signed by the secretary and the treasurer of "La Fraternelle," the Society of French Refugees.

The acquaintance between Madame de Brimont and Mr Bradlaugh, commencing in her visit to his lodgings on the 17th of September 1870, ripened into a friendship which lasted for the rest of my father's life. From that September day these two never ceased to be friends; through good report and ill report Madame de Brimont stood by him. While my father lay upon what proved to be his deathbed, I received a letter from her in which, writing in French, she sent him a message from "sa meilleure amie," "and that," she said, "I think I may claim to be, for during the twenty years I have known him I have never once swerved in my friendship for him—no, not for a single moment." My father, very weak and ill, was deeply moved when I read the letter to him. "It is true," he said brokenly, "it is true."

In visiting at Madame de Brimont's in London and in Paris Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with many of the best known men in France. The Prince Napoléon he met in London at Madame de Brimont's apartments at the Grosvenor Hotel. He met him, and had fully an hour's talk with him before he knew to whom he had been chatting so freely; the title "Monseigneur" given to his companion by another visitor fell upon his ear; his mind immediately ran over the "monseigneurs" likely to be present, and by a process of elimination he arrived at the right one. These two men, so markedly dissimilar on most points, so similar on one or two, were at once mutually attracted. The name of Napoléon was a hateful one to Mr Bradlaugh; the idea of a reputed "professional demagogue" was hardly likely to be pleasing to a Napoléon; yet despite all the probabilities in favour of a determined antipathy on both sides, they were the best of friends. Prince Jerome, who was a Freethinker, went to hear Mr Bradlaugh's speeches at the Hall of Science, at the Dialectical Society, and elsewhere, and was delighted with them. My father told me an amusing little anecdote concerning the first time he dined with Prince Jerome. He (Mr Bradlaugh) did not at that time own the luxury of a "dress suit," and therefore was obliged to wear his ordinary frock coat and black tie. His host met him, dressed

of course in the regulation fashion; a few minutes later, as others came into the room, he disappeared, returning after a moment or two dressed also in a frock coat and black tie. My father's eye was quick to note this courtesy, and within a few days he regretfully spent money he could ill spare on a dress suit, determined never to put any one to that trouble for him again.

Very many letters passed between the two, covering a period from 1871 to 1889. Mr Bradlaugh often greatly disapproved of the projects of the Prince, and this after some years had the effect of lessening their intimacy, although it did not lessen their friendship. When in Paris Mr Bradlaugh was always a welcome visitor at 86 Boulevart Malesherbes, or later at the house in the Avenue d'Antin, and once he visited the Prince at the Villa de Pranzins. During the last ten years, however, they saw each other but little, although an occasional letter passed, always on Prince Napoléon's side of a warm, friendly character, like the one I now give :—

"Villa de Pranzins, Près Nyon,
"Canton de Vaud, Suisse, 30 7bre 1887.

"MON CHER MONSIEUR BRADLAUGH,—Quand on vous a connu et apprecié on ne vous oublie pas.

"Je suis charmé que mon livre vous ait fait plaisir. Si vous avez le temps lirez le, mais n'oubliez pas que c'est un livre uniquement français. Je lis quelque fois vos discours—vous traversez une crise—quel en sera le résultat? Je vois que vous n'avez pas oublié votre français. Je vous renouvelle tous mes sentiments d'amitiés.—Votre affectionné

"NAPOLÉON." *

The last occasion on which these two met was in 1889, when the Prince in crossing the Channel met with that terrible disaster in which his old valet lost his life. He wished my father to help him about his will; he told him quite tranquilly that he was suffering from Bright's disease, that he could not possibly live much longer; he had property in England as well as in France, and he wished to bequeath to his younger son, Prince Louis, of whom

* "MY DEAR MR BRADLAUGH,—When one has known and appreciated you, one does not forget you.

"I am charmed that my book has given you pleasure. If you have the time, read it, but do not forget that it is a book entirely French. I sometimes read your speeches—you are passing through a crisis—what will be the result? I see that you have not forgotten your French. I renew every sentiment of affection for you.—Your affectionate NAPOLÉON."

he was very fond, every penny that the law did not compel him to leave to the elder son, Prince Victor. Over the dinner-table they had a long chat upon this and other matters, and my father promised to draft a will. After this they never met again. On his return my father told me how aged, shrunken, and ill the Prince looked; in commiserating his condition we had not the remotest idea that he was himself stricken with that identical complaint, and would be the first to die! The suggestions, or draft, for a will were sent according to promise, and Mr Bradlaugh received the following acknowledgment:—

"Villa de Pranzins, Près Nyon,
"Canton de Vaud, Suisse, 2 Mai 1889.

"MON CHER BRADLAUGH,—J'ai reçu le projet—de loin et par écrit il est difficile de m'en rendre compte. Je me reserver d'en parler avec vous à un prochain voyage que je ferai peut-être à Londres.

"Recevez, mon cher Monsieur Bradlaugh, l'assurance de toute ma consideration la plus distinguée. NAPOLÉON." *

At Madame de Brimont's Mr Bradlaugh also met Monsieur Emile de Girardin, then of course well on in years, but remarkable for his keen wit and clear-headedness—although I must confess that I did not, at that time at least, admire his keen wit. One evening, while we were in Paris for our schooling, my sister and I were introduced to him; he looked at us both critically, then again at my sister, and, not knowing that we understood French, turned to Madame de Brimont and said: "J'aime mieux celle-ci." I was quite conscious that my sister was better liked than I, and deservedly so, but to hear such a preference stated thus coolly before one's face is rather a shock to any girl. Then there was Monsieur Emanuel Arago, a tremendous talker, who had been one of the Government of the 4th of September, and with Jules Favre stood at the window of the Hotel de Ville with Gambetta when he proclaimed the Republic of France; there were also M. Dupont-Whyte, the economist; M. Massé, a judge of appeal; M. Edouard Pourtalés, a journalist of great

* "MY DEAR BRADLAUGH,—I have received the draft—at this distance and in writing it is difficult for me to fully understand it. I propose to talk it over with you on my next visit to London, which I shall perhaps make shortly. Receive, my dear Mr Bradlaugh, the assurance of my most distinguished consideration. NAPOLÉON."

pertinacity and even greater notoriety, and many others whose names now escape my memory. Léon Gambetta,* Mr Bradlaugh first met, not, I think, at Madame de Brimont's, but elsewhere. Yves Guyot, too, had long been a fast friend.

For his intimacy with such people as Prince Napoléon and M. de Girardin, Mr Bradlaugh was much attacked by a certain section of the French Republicans, as well as by Dr Karl Marx, who held him up to public obloquy for having committed the terrible crime of dining with such people. Mr Bradlaugh's answer to this was: "As to where I may or may not have dined, it is too ridiculous for serious reply. I have dined with a bishop, without giving allegiance to the Church of England; with a Jewish Rabbi, without adopting the faith of Abraham; I broke bread more than once with good old Father Spratt of Dublin, without inclining to Roman Catholicism." Such attacks as these troubled him little, but, although it made no difference to his conduct, he felt deeply hurt when some two or three French friends for and with whom he had worked did not understand that he could know a Prince and yet remain a Republican.

* In the following extract from an article written by Mr Bradlaugh in January 1884 upon "The Attitude of Freethought in Politics," allusion is made to an interesting conversation held with Gambetta:—"My personal attitude as a Freethinker in politics," said Mr Bradlaugh, "was the subject of some hostile discussion in France about four years ago, when the partisans of M. Jules Ferry were rigorously and, as I thought, harshly, enforcing the laws against the clerical orders. I strongly disapproved of the application of penal laws to the religious orders. It was very forcibly and very justly urged to me by my Radical French friends, that these religious orders had been, and were, the persevering and persistent foes of liberty, and that when their party was in power, the clerical legion were merciless in persecuting the Republicans and Freethinkers. My answer was and is: 'As I do not admit the right of the Church to use the law to suppress or punish me, neither will I claim or countenance the use of the law against the Church.' It was urged, and quite truly, that the Roman Catholic Church throughout its whole history had been the never-ceasing persecutor and oppressor of all aspirations for human liberty. My answer still was and is: 'We should fight with the pen, the press, the tongue, the school; not the gaol or the officer of the law.' If we cannot win with reason, I will not try to win with force. Victory with the latter only decides which it is that is temporarily strongest. In a long conversation some eleven years ago—which went far into the night—with the late M. Léon Gambetta, in which he plainly put difficulties caused to the Republican party by the enmity of Clericalism to progress in France, and painted in vivid colours the danger of the struggle, I took the same ground, and here again I maintain it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DOZEN DEBATES, 1870-1873.

In 1870 Mr Bradlaugh held five oral debates: one with Mr G. J. Holyoake, in London, in the month of March; the next with Alexander Robertson of Dundonnochie, at Edinburgh, in June; the third and fifth with the Rev. A. J. Harrison, at Newcastle, in September, and at Bristol, in December; while the fourth debate was held with David King,* at Bury, in December. Besides these there was a written debate upon Exodus xxi. 7-11, with Mr B. H. Cowper.

The discussion with Mr George Jacob Holyoake occupied two successive nights, the 10th and 11th of March, and was by far the most important of the five. It represents different schools of Freethought, and was for many years—is, perhaps, at the present day—copiously quoted, especially by persons opposed to every view of Freethought, who would confound representatives of one school by quoting opinions taken from the other. The full wording of the subjects discussed was: for the first night "The Principles of Secularism do not include Atheism;" for the second "Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism." Mr Holyoake maintained the affirmative of these propositions, and each disputant occupied two half-hours on each evening. Mr Austin Holyoake took the chair on both occasions. The difference between Mr Bradlaugh and Mr Holyoake was not so much a difference of opinion as a difference of the methods of advocacy of their opinion. Both were Freethinkers of the most convinced kind; but while Mr Bradlaugh called himself an Atheist, Mr Holyoake chose rather to describe himself as a Secularist, and the whole difference between them is indicated in these two names. The word "Atheist" had been—and is still, to some extent—used as a term of opprobrium; it has been perverted from its natural meaning to imply everything that

* No accurate report of this debate exists.

is vile; Mr Bradlaugh wore the name defiantly, and held to it the closer for the sake of the slandered Atheists of the past. He was an Atheist, *i.e.* "without God," in the simple meaning of the word; if others chose to attach to it an odious significance, the discredit lay in the narrowness of their minds and not in the Atheist, compelled to endure the baseless calumnies heaped upon him. Mr Bradlaugh was no "Infidel:" he least of any could be branded as unfaithful; but since Atheist and Infidel were often used as synonymous terms, he did not even flinch from sharing the name of "Infidel" with those brave workers for religious and political liberty, such as Paine or Richard Carlile. Nevertheless, Infidel he was not, although Atheist he was.

Now, Mr Holyoake was equally an Atheist, but he did not see that there was anything to be gained by the use of a name which had so undeservedly become a term of reproach; he preferred to find a new name and make a fresh start under new colours. In a debate held seventeen years before with the Rev. Brewin Grant, Mr Holyoake had said that opprobrium was associated with the word "Atheist," and that this would be got rid of by the use of the word "Secularist," which would also bring before the mind the moral objects in view. Moved probably by the idea of making the path easy to the faint-hearted who were frightened by the bogey conjured up by the word "Atheist," Mr Holyoake was anxious to disassociate his new name altogether from Atheism, and went so far as to say that Secularism did not involve Atheism or Scepticism. Thus the new Secularism looked askance at the old Atheism, and seemed anxious to have it known that the two had "no connection." Mr Holyoake regarded the "imputation" that Secularism involved Atheism and Scepticism as "the greatest impediment in the way of" national Secular education. He claimed for his Secularism that it was a "new form of Freethought," perfectly independent of Atheism or Theism. Secularism proposed "to set up principles of nature in the place of principles of theology, and found, if possible, a kingdom of reason for those who found the kingdom of faith inadequate or unreliable." Secularism, Mr Holyoake contended, should assert its own principles, but not assail others, neither needing to assail nor condescending to assail theological systems. These ideas will doubtless commend themselves to many, especially to those who do not look under the surface of the words; but we know that

before we can put nature "in the place of" theology, we must depose theology, and we also know that when geology points out the secular truth of the numberless ages it has taken to form the earth's crust, by the mere assertion of such a truth it assails the theological dogma of the creation of the world in seven days. Mr Bradlaugh in his speech put it in this way: "The Secularist finds the kingdom of faith impossible, he finds belief in God impossible, he finds belief in religion impossible. What is the difference between finding belief in God impossible and an Atheist?" He said further: "Although at present it may be perfectly true that all men who are Secularists are not Atheists, I put it that in my opinion the logical consequence of the acceptance of Secularism must be that the man gets to Atheism if he has brains enough to comprehend." Mr Holyoake spoke of various bodies all over the kingdom occupied with a negative form of Freethought; he met with many orators who were mere negationists. The stock-in-trade of a negationist, he said, is the simplest possible; he has only to deny what some one else holds, and he is set up in the art of warfare. But these societies and these orators were entirely unknown to Mr Bradlaugh; those he had worked with for ten years or more had done positive work, and of this he gave many instances. This attack and reply are of importance because the terms "negationist" and "destructive freethought" have grown into cant phrases, used as terms of reproach by persons who do not trouble to consider either exactly what they mean, or whether there is anyone to whom they are really applicable. Mr Holyoake asserted that Atheism does not embody a system of morals, while Mr Bradlaugh replied that "You cannot have a scheme of morality without Atheism. The Utilitarian scheme is an Atheistical scheme. The Utilitarian scheme is a defiance of the doctrine of Providence, and a protest against God." Referring to Mr Holyoake's objection to the words "Infidelity" and "Atheism" because of the opprobrium which has gathered round them, Mr Bradlaugh said:—

"I maintain that the opprobrium cast upon the word Atheism is a lie. I believe Atheists as a body to be men deserving respect—I know the leading men among them who have made themselves prominent, and I do not care what kind of character religious men may put round the word Atheist, I would fight until men respect it. I do not quarrel with the word 'Secular' if it is taken to

include this body of men, but I do object to it if we are told Atheism has nothing to do with it. I object when we are told that Atheism is not its province, because I say that the moment you tell me that you have to deal with the affairs of this life, to the exclusion of the rest, you must in effect deny the rest. If you do not deny the rest, you leave your Secularism in doubt, you partially paralyse the efforts on your own side. If you tell our people, 'You must not impugn the sincerity of your opponents, that you must not impute bad motives to them,' when they read the foul lies heaped on the graves of the great dead, and hear the base calumnies used against the hard-working living, I say you are teaching to them that which I do not consider their duty. You should never lightly impute, never rashly urge against any opponent motives, you should never do it without full proof to justify your imputation."

The proposition for the second night's debate, as worded by Mr Holyoake, was, "Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism." Mr Bradlaugh opened in a very careful speech. Dealing first with the word Scepticism, he went on to say, "Criticism is, I presume, the art of judging upon the merits of any given proposition; and I put it, that you cannot have criticism at all without doubt. Doubt is, in fact, the beginning of knowledge, and I put it expressly, that it is utterly impossible to have Secular Criticism without having scepticism; as to the dogmas of Theology in general, and scepticism as to the Bible and Christianity in particular." He then proceeded to state in detail and at considerable length the points of Scepticism involved by Secular Criticism. Mr Holyoake, so far from traversing this position, really endorsed it when he said (in his first speech on the second night): "The secular method is to criticise the Scriptures so as to adopt that which is useful, leaving alone that which is mischievous or disagreeable." A criticism of the Scriptures, undertaken with the view of accepting some points as worthy and rejecting others as unworthy, cannot by any possibility exclude scepticism. We examine a set of precepts, we judge them, we distinguish between the false and the true, the beauties and the blemishes. To do this, we must begin by doubting their truth and beauty as a whole, and before we can leave any alone, we must be sceptical whether a belief in them is necessary to our salvation and a disbelief in them a sure road to eternal damnation. Mr Holyoake

also spoke favourably of ignoring Christianity, apparently failing to see that in a country, Christian by law, with a State-supported Christian religion and Christianity taught in our schools, to ignore is impossible. Much of Mr Holyoake's speech had no bearing upon the subject under discussion, but was simply an attack upon persons and the more transitory aspects of the Atheistic position. To this Mr Bradlaugh replied, and of course his reply was as irrelevant as the attack, but putting this aside, he asked in his last speech: "Has Mr Holyoake shown that Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism? Not at all. What secular principles has he advanced which are inconsistent with the position I take? None." I think with this everyone who carefully reads the debate will agree. Mr Holyoake in his final speech, which also wound up the debate, indulged in considerable sarcasm at his opponent's expense, and made his memorable and oft-quoted sneer at the Hall of Science; speaking of it as "this kind of place in which we now meet, opposite a lunatic asylum, where people, so the enemy says, naturally expect to find us." Before sitting down, Mr Holyoake quoted statements he had made elsewhere as to Secularism, from one of which I will take a few lines, in order to put his position fairly in his own words:—

"Secularism," he said, "is not an argument against Christianity, it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, it advances others. Secularism does not say there is no light and guidance elsewhere, but maintains that there is light and guidance in secular truth, whose conditions and sanctions exist independently, act independently, and act for ever. Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life."

Mr Austin Holyoake, who, as I have said, occupied the chair on both evenings, was specially invited by his brother to express his opinion. This he objected to do at the debate, but he afterwards wrote a short criticism, in the course of which he asked the pertinent question: "How can any one *not* an Atheist be a Secularist?" and the answer to this would, I think, be hard to find.

On the 22nd and 23rd of June Mr Bradlaugh met Alexander Robertson, Esq., of Dundonnochie, to discuss with him the Existence of Deity. The meetings were held in the New

Waverley Hall, Edinburgh, and there was a large attendance on each evening. Mr Robertson, however, proved utterly incompetent; and the affair, regarded as a debate, was a complete fiasco.* On the second evening, indeed, a number of Christians left the room as a protest against Mr Robertson's method of advocacy. All that I need note here is that Mr Bradlaugh once more stated his position as an Atheist. I repeat it, as he himself put it at different times in his life, because even to this day his views are often misapprehended.

In his opening speech Mr Robertson had conjured up several absurd theories of Atheism (amongst which the inevitable "chance"-made world figured), and had triumphantly disposed of them. Mr Bradlaugh in his reply said:—

"I am an Atheist, but I do not say there is no God; and until you tell me what you mean by God I am not mad enough to say anything of the kind. So long as the word 'God' represents nothing to me, so long as it is a word that is not the correlative and expression of something clear and distinct, I am not going to tilt against what may be nothing-nowhere. Why should I? If you tell me that by God you mean 'something' which created the universe, which before the act of creation was not; 'something' which has the power of destroying that universe; 'something' which rules and governs it, and which nevertheless is entirely distinct and different in substance from the universe—then I am prepared to deny that any such existence can be."

On the next evening he referred to this, and enlarged upon it thus:—

"I said last night that the Atheist does not say there is no God, so long as the word simply represents an indefinite quantity or quality — of you don't know what, you don't know where: but I object to the God of Christianity, and absolutely deny it. In all ages men have fashioned their Gods according to their want of knowledge—the more ignorant the people, the more

* The *Fife News* spoke of it as a meeting between "the Atheist and the ignoramus," and the *Christian News* said: "The second night's debate was no debate. So completely did the Theist fail, in more senses than one, that he need never appear in the city of Edinburgh again as a defender of religion."

numerous their deities, because the Gods represented their personifications of force. Men beheld phenomena beyond, and independent of, human ability, and they ascribed these phenomena to deities, the 'God' in each case representing their ignorance."

The first debate with the Rev. A. J. Harrison was held for two nights in September, at the Newcastle Town Hall; and 3000 persons, at least, were present on each night. For each speaker there was a partisan chairman, and over these an impartial umpire—an arrangement particularly disliked by Mr Bradlaugh, who thought one chairman quite sufficient, and who was always willing that that one should be unconnected with the Freethought party. The umpire—that is to say, the real chairman—was on this occasion Lieut.-Col. Perkins, and he won golden opinions for his tact, unfailing good humour, and courtesy, qualities which the uproarious spirit of the audience rendered very necessary. Mr Harrison has a certain reputation, so that I can hardly pass this first debate with my father without some notice, as I might otherwise have been tempted to do; for, in truth, I do not think there is very much to be learned from it. Mr Harrison worded the subjects to be discussed, and Mr Bradlaugh accepted every condition which was proposed. The propositions which the reverend gentleman chose to affirm were: (1.) That Secularism, distinctively considered, is not a system of truth, and therefore cannot justify its existence to the reason; and (2.) That Secularism, distinctively considered, is not a system of morality, and is therefore unworthy of trust as a guide. Mr Harrison opened the debate by examining the proposition he himself had worded, declaring at the outset that Secularism could not be a system of truth, "*first*, because it has no truth to offer; and *second*, because it is not a system at all." Mr Bradlaugh, in reply, thought it was hardly necessary to discuss "what is needed to constitute a system, or whether Secularism is a system or not, because," he said, "I think I have made it clear enough all my life through that the great merit of the thought of which I am permitted to be the advocate is that it does not pretend that any one man, or any dozen of men, have a right to lay down a number of propositions, and say, 'These make a system which shall bind the world.'" Mr Harrison contended that there were three kinds of Atheism—the Atheism of doubt, the Atheism of ignorance, and a compound of doubt and ignorance, which last,

said the reverend disputant politely, was "Mr Bradlaugh's own Atheism."

This version of his views my father repudiated as "monstrously unfair as well as utterly untrue," and then went on to deal with such other allegations as:

"That the Atheist could commit murder, or steal, without fear of the consequences. To try the actual value of the argument," he said, "it is not unfair to ask, Did a Theist ever steal? If so, then a belief in God and his power to punish have been insufficient to prevent him from committing the crime. The fact is, that those who overlook such arguments overlook the great truth that all men seek happiness, though in diverse fashions. The Atheists hold that by teaching men the real road to human happiness, it is possible to keep them from the by-ways of criminality and error. The Atheist would teach men to be moral now, not because God offered as an inducement some reward by-and-by, but because in the virtuous act itself immediate good was ensured to the doer, and to the world surrounding him. The Atheist would prevent men from lying, stealing, murdering, not from fear of the eternal consequences after death, but because crime made this life itself a course of misery. On the other hand, Theism, by asserting that God was the creator and governor of the universe, hindered and checked man's efforts by declaring God's will to be the sole and controlling power. Atheists, by declaring all events to be in accordance with natural laws—that is, happening in certain ascertained sequences—stimulated men to discover the best conditions of life, and offered the most powerful inducements to morality."

In spite of this statement, directly bearing on the affirmative truths taught by Atheism, Mr Harrison continued to urge that Mr Bradlaugh had not proved that there was anything positive in Atheism. "All that Mr Bradlaugh said was positive with regard to Atheism belonged to Science and not to Atheism" he said, apparently failing to see that Science itself is really Atheistic in the true and literal acceptation of the word, although its teachers and professors may be Theists. Science teaches the origin and nature of phenomena without reference to God, and sometimes even in direct contradiction to theological dogmas.

On the following evening Mr Harrison sought to prove that

Secularism was not a trustworthy moral guide, and to this end he contended that Atheism was without the moral help that came from (1) a belief in God, (2) a belief in immortality, and (3) a study of human nature. This last contention showed utter ignorance or misapprehension of the Atheistic position. Mr Bradlaugh, in reply, dealt very trenchantly with the kind of moral help to be obtained from the God of the Old and New Testament, but he was stopped in his argument, as it was ruled that he must not deal with any particular phase of Theism, only with Theism generally. Before he was stopped, however, he stated that—

"The position of the Atheist was that he did not affirm a universe, and outside it a God; but he said, 'By your knowledge of the conditions of existence, so you may shape, and so will be shaped, your thought and your conduct, and that thought and that conduct which tend to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and to the least injury of any—that thought and that conduct are moral, whatever your religious profession may be.' But that guide to morality was not got out of any system of Theism; it was purely Atheistic—that was, it was found outside God, without God."

During this debate my father was suffering very much from a relaxed throat, and on both nights he had to speak amidst considerable uproar, the audience being exceedingly noisy. In his final speech, on the second evening, he became so exhausted by the continual interruption and outcries that he begged his audience "in mercy" and "humanity" to allow him to finish his argument in quiet, but this was an appeal which fell upon deaf ears.*

---

* "The last speech of Mr Bradlaugh's was a piece of almost unparalleled eloquence, which might have been very effective had he received fair play, but this, we are sorry to say, was undoubtedly denied him, and he proceeded amidst a storm of interruptions, hissings, and howlings, renewed again and again."—*Blyth Weekly News.*

"Mr Bradlaugh was stormed down, and really refused a hearing. This kind of conduct was bad on the face of it. If his arguments were ridiculous, they would be the easier answered. If they were beyond or beside the point at issue, they were unworthy a reply."—*Sunderland Evening Chronicle.*

The Newcastle papers gave lengthy reports of the proceedings, and the *Weekly Chronicle* remarked that, in consequence of his suffering from an affection of the throat, the effect of a severe cold, Mr Bradlaugh "sustained the debate with considerable pain and difficulty."

The restrictions placed upon Mr Bradlaugh by the conditions of the Newcastle debate were such as to cause great irritation and discontent amongst Freethinkers; * and in consequence, a second debate was fixed to take place at Bristol on the 13th and 14th December. The subject chosen for argument was "Theism *v.* Atheism." Professor Newman was in the chair, and on each evening there was a very large attendance. In the course of his introductory remarks Professor Newman mentioned an interesting discussion society then in existence in London—"a society," he said, "called a Metaphysical Club. It was commenced by the poet, Mr Alfred Tennyson, and, I believe, by Mr Browning also. They associated with them certain eminent gentlemen in London, and they induced Archbishop Manning to enter it. Professor Huxley and others are also members of it, and it was made a condition that in their discussions every member should be free to deny the existence of God, and Archbishop Manning entirely concurs in this. Mr James Martineau, my friend, a very eminent and intellectual gentleman, belonged to it, and he regarded it to be essential that persons must speak out from the bottom of their hearts, otherwise they did not get the fulness of the argument."

Mr Harrison opened with a speech much more subtle than any of those delivered at Newcastle, and was throughout more courteous, though even now there were phrases which would have been better left unsaid, and, while extremely careful to keep his opponent within the limits imposed by the conditions of the debate, he was not always so scrupulous about his own words.† Mr Bradlaugh's arguments were clear and forcible to a degree; he was evidently in much better form than on the previous occasion, but it is not easy to detach passages, although there is much that is valuable as giving different aspects of his opinions.‡ In the

* "I had said, in the course of my remarks against Secularism, that Secularism was Atheism, and Atheism was a negation. Mr Bradlaugh claimed the right to say what Atheism negated. According to the conditions of the debate, I objected to that subject being entered into" (the Rev. A. J. Harrison, December 1870). These words show how peculiarly one-sided the conditions were.

† "If Mr Bradlaugh had objected to some things said by Mr Harrison last night, I should have said they were out of order" (Prof. Newman on the second evening).

‡ Those who wish to read the whole argument will find a verbatim report in the *National Reformer* for 25th Dec. 1870 and 1st Jan. 1871.

following May the Rev. A. J. Harrison and Mr Bradlaugh engaged in a third contest. This was conducted in Socratic form: no speeches were made, the discussion being limited to question and answer. Mr Harrison undertook to prove that "there is an Intelligent Being superior to man," and Mr Bradlaugh that "there is not and cannot be an Infinite, Omnipotent, Immutable Being distinct from the Universe." This discussion was held at Birmingham, and lasted three nights. But even this did not satisfy the disputants and exhaust their energy, for in 1872 they had yet another debate, which was this time held in London, at the Hall of Science. The subject discussed at this, their fourth public controversy, was the teaching of Christian Theism* as represented on a certain page in Mr Bradlaugh's pamphlet, "A Plea for Atheism."

In the summer of 1872 Father Ignatius wrote to Mr Bradlaugh, asking that an opportunity might be given him to address an audience of London Freethinkers. This request was readily acceded to, but in consequence of other work and ill-health Father Ignatius was obliged to delay the delivery of this address until the end of November. The Hall of Science, which was put at his disposal, was crowded right out to the street, and it was estimated that at least two thousand persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr Austin Holyoake presided over what was really an informal debate. Father Ignatius elected to speak on "Jesus Christ, the central point of human history," and when he had finished Mr Bradlaugh spoke for an equal time in reply. The audience, densely crowded as it was, listened intently and earnestly, and the perfect stillness maintained during both speeches was broken only by applause. Not a sound of dissent was heard; each speaker was listened to with respect and attention. At the conclusion Father Ignatius was thanked by the Freethinkers for the fearlessness and the courtesy with which he had spoken, and the audience were thanked by the Rev. Father for the fairness with which they had listened to him. He said "he would be happy if his Protestant fellow-Christians would receive him with equal fairness."

As he desired to reply to Mr Bradlaugh's speech, Father Ignatius fixed to go again to the Hall of Science on the 12th of December,

* This debate is published in pamphlet form, under the title, "What does Christian Theism teach?"

but when the day arrived there was some doubt whether he could get there, as he had been subpœnaed to Worcester as a witness. In consequence of this the attendance was not quite so overwhelming as before. When Father Ignatius entered the Hall he was welcomed with much cheering, which was cordially renewed when he rose to speak. Before entering upon his subject, he said that he had received permission from Mr Bradlaugh and the Chairman (Mr Austin Holyoake) to ask God to aid him that night; but even with that permission, he would not do so, for he had no wish to hurt anyone's susceptibilities, unless the meeting also gave its sanction. Those present having signified their assent by a show of hands, Father Ignatius "in an impassioned prayer sought the assistance of God to render his address effectual." Then proceeding to the business of the evening, he deftly—if not very convincingly—explained away the objections which had been urged by Mr Bradlaugh to certain Biblical passages. As before, he was followed by Mr Bradlaugh, and both apparently spoke with great force. In the spring of 1873 there was held a third of these informal controversies. On every occasion a charge was made for admission, and the proceeds given, by Father Ignatius' desire, to the Hall of Science building fund. His frankness, fearlessness, and courtesy made an indelible impression upon the minds of the frequenters of the Hall. To Mr Bradlaugh he always wrote in terms of the greatest cordiality, and although the differences between them were of the widest possible kind, I am quite sure that my father was sensible of this kindly feeling and reciprocated it.

In addition to the pleasant interchange of opinion on theological matters with Father Ignatius, Mr Bradlaugh held, in the December of 1872, a set discussion upon Spiritualism with Mr Burns, editor of *Human Nature* and *The Medium and Daybreak*. Spiritualism was a subject to which he had given considerable attention for nearly twenty years prior to this debate. He had devoted a large amount of time to the reading of spiritualistic literature and the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena. He had taken part in many *séances*, and had seen different mediums, but except in one or two cases the sittings had led to nothing. With Mrs Marshall he witnessed some "clumsy trickery"; with the Davenport brothers he saw some "clever sleight-of-hand." When he went to "the conjuring performance of the Davenport Brothers"—as he

somewhere styles it—he was asked to take off his coat and lay it on the table. He was told, "You must sit in the dark; you must hold Mrs Fay's hands on one side and Mrs Ira Davenport the other." He asked, "But why?" They said, "The spirits might hurt you"; to which he replied, "I will take the risk of that." He was then told, "If you do not submit to the conditions, there can be no manifestation." Under these circumstances he concluded to accept the conditions.* The lights were extinguished, and after about a minute and a half they were re-lit, and Mr Fay, who was tied in a chair, was found wearing the coat. The lights were again extinguished and the coat thrown upon Mr Bradlaugh. All tests and opportunities for investigation were absolutely refused, but my father had no doubt that Mr Fay was untied and retied in the dark. He afterwards saw Maskelyne do every one of the tricks done by the Davenport Brothers, and more besides, though Maskelyne did not pretend that anything other than the clever art of conjuring lay at the bottom of the performance.

When the Dialectical Society made their inquiry into the phenomena attributed to Spiritualism, my father was one of the Committee. He was at every sub-committee meeting † at which D. D. Home, the well-known medium, was present, and at half a dozen of the general meetings at least. However, none of the boasted manifestations occurred, and the sittings were almost, if not quite, "void of result." Mr Bradlaugh, in giving his impression of Mr Home and the results obtained with him as medium, said:—

"I am bound to say that Mr Home met me in the frankest manner possible. He told me I was one of the few people he wanted very much to see, and probably, as my address was not known, and I am not a very public man in England, that was the reason he had not discovered me until I was placed upon that Committee. But I met him in the same frank spirit; and as he offered every opportunity for investigation, we took it. And the first evening we changed every shred of clothing he had on for some other. Perhaps that might have destroyed the proper combinations, for we had not the slightest scintilla of anything. I sat with Mr Home night after night till Mr Home was tired."‡

---

* *National Reformer*, Jan. 19, 1873. † Held at 4 Fitzroy Square.
‡ *National Reformer*, Jan. 12, 1873.

And the only result, such as it was, of all this investigation may be summed up in a few words. There was a tinkling of glass, a slight wave of the table, and a few raps. The raps were such as could be easily produced by mechanical means, and were so produced by my father afterwards—not that he charged Mr Home with causing the raps in that particular way; but as he pointed out, it was impossible for any one, under the circumstances, to fix upon the precise spot whence such raps came; it was impossible that the unguided ear could exactly relegate the sound. The tinkling of glass was such as he had often heard in a room where there was gas burning; the wave of the table—which did not move more than half an inch—was afterwards repeatedly produced by Dr Edmunds and himself. Beyond these trifles there was no other "semblance of manifestation," and yet some Spiritualists boldly asserted that the result of the Dialectical Society's inquiry was to convert the investigators to Spiritualism.*

Mr Bradlaugh opened the debate with Mr Burns, and as always, when he made the opening speech, he used the most careful language in trying to make his position clear. Beyond that speech, and for what he told during the two nights of his personal experiences and inquiries into Spiritualism, the debate is really of little importance. Mr Burns afterwards apologised for his treatment of the subject on the ground of ill-health.†

---

* *Human Nature*, Jan. 1871.

† *The Medium and Daybreak*, Dec. 20, 1872.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FAMILY AFFAIRS.

When our home was broken up in May 1870, and my father went to live by himself in those two little rooms in Turner Street, he was very downcast and lonely. Apart from the many weighty reasons he had to make him heavy-hearted, he felt the separation from his children, young though we were, much more than might be imagined or than we indeed quite realised ourselves at the time. He felt it for his own sake, but even more he felt it for ours. We had been away from him but little more than two weeks—weeks crowded with worry and work—when he wrote us a little letter, which I shall always keep amongst my dearest treasures, so much does it seem to convey a sense of his fatherly love for us, and his fatherly anxiety for our lives in the difficult circumstances in which we were placed. The letter is written in French and very legibly, the foreign language making a sort of excuse for the letter. He writes:—

"My Dear little Daughters,—I have a notion to write you from time to time in French, because by that means more than by any other I shall make you learn the language. Unfortunately for your instruction, my own knowledge of this beautiful tongue is very limited, but I hope that you will correct me each time you find mistakes. I want to know every thought, every act of your lives, because, as you will be too long out of my sight, I would keep you very close to my heart, and I want to watch in thought the steps I cannot see each day with my own eyes.—À vous, mes petites bien aimées, C. Bradlaugh."

Our brother's death drew us yet nearer to him, and while we were at Midhurst he wrote to us constantly, scolding us if we delayed too long in answering his little letters. As soon as he was able, he took a third room at Turner Street, and sent for each of us by turns to spend a month with him, to write for him; but as he was unwilling to separate my sister and me for long together this was by no means a regular arrangement.

After he became acquainted with Madame de Brimont, she soon expressed a desire to know us. I have said that she was a staunch friend to my father; to my sister and to me she was goodness itself. She asked my father to let her find a school for us in Paris, and as he had always been very anxious for us to know French, he let himself be persuaded, in spite of sundry misgivings about the extra expense. A school was found, and to Paris my father took us at the end of September 1872. We went a few days before the beginning of the school-term and stayed with him at his old hotel in the Rue Vivienne—now demolished to make room for the extension of the *Bibliothéque*. We were very proud to be with him, and proud of course to be for the first time in Paris; we lunched or dined at Madame de Brimont's, and our leisure moments were filled up by most delightful drives outside Paris, or walks along the Champs Elysées or the Boulevards. Before entering school, we three went one day with Madame de Brimont to make acquaintance with the Directress of the establishment and to look over the building. The two ladies walked on first, chatting of the school arrangements and so on, whilst we behind admired, but could not imitate, the deliberate calmness with which they trod the highly polished parquet floors. My sister and I, as we slipped about and frantically caught at each other for support, thought we never should be able to walk steadily on these waxed floors. Before we left, Madame la Directrice asked what was our religion. Mr Bradlaugh, inwardly expecting difficulties, answered, "None, Madame." Madame's "Ah! Monsieur, that saves trouble," brought a smile of surprise and amusement to my father's face. Seeing this, the Directress went on: "You know, Monsieur, I have young ladies here of various religions, but they are principally Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Greek Church; it is sometimes difficult to make their different religious duties fit in with the studies."

We were very happy at this school; there were good masters, and we had plenty of work to do. On Thursday afternoons, the "at home" day for the school, Madame de Brimont visited us, and our Saturday afternoons and Sundays were spent with her. Unfortunately, I was never very strong, and during the winter I fell ill. At Christmas my father came quite unexpectedly to fetch us home for the holidays. My sister went back in the course of a week or two, but the doctor would not allow me to return. The details of that journey home, and the sad story told at the end,

remain vividly in my memory. We had been surprised at receiving my father's letter to say we were to go home, a letter followed almost immediately by my father himself. It was two or three days before Christmas; he had travelled at night, and coming to us in the morning, gave us just a few hours to get ready, and in the afternoon he came to fetch us away. He seemed depressed and preoccupied, and though he made us plenty of gay speeches, we were conscious that his mood was not gay. We left Paris that night, and well do I remember what great care he took of me, the invalid, holding me in his arms a great part of the way. As we drove to Turner Street from the station, in the gloomy dawn of a dull December morning, I could not help noticing, in spite of my own pain and weariness, how grey and haggard his face looked. We passed the day in London, and in the evening he took us to Midhurst, where we were all to spend Christmas.

After the first excitement of our home-coming had somewhat subsided, my father got up from his chair, and throwing back his head with a peculiar movement, said abruptly, "Well, Bob's in prison."

"My God!" exclaimed my grandfather, who invoked the Deity as indifferently as if he had been a Christian.

My father was silent for some minutes, and then as, in a few short sentences, he told the story, my sister and I realised how heavy had been his care on the previous day whilst he had tried to make merry with us.

William Robert Bradlaugh was twelve years younger than his brother Charles, and was only seven years old at the time of their father's death. He was educated at an Orphan Asylum, and on his leaving this institution my father found situations for him, which, however, for one reason or another, he did not keep. At one time, after he had been very ill, I remember that he passed his time of convalescence at our house, where he found all the kindness and comfort it was a brother's part to bestow. To the distress of his relatives, and especially to the grief of his mother, he took to excessive drinking. His mother he completely neglected, even during the long illness which kept her to her room before her death.

Surprise has often been expressed at the evident estrangement between the brothers; and this has been especially the case with

religious persons after they have listened to, or heard of, the public protestations of religion and love for my father which have fallen from the Christian, protestations which the Atheist has received in silence. He, who so well knew the worth of these phrases, preferred to let himself be misunderstood by his silence rather than utter the miserable truth.

The story my father had to tell us that Christmas Eve was that his brother Robert (he was always called by his second name) had been arrested on the charge of embezzling various small sums from his employer. During the next few days, while he was under remand, he wrote from the House of Detention, thanking my father for his kindness to his wife, protesting his innocence, and expressing himself as "perfectly happy and contented," knowing he could clear himself from all charges, and asking my father's help in his defence. At the final examination in the Police Court the case was sent up for trial at the Middlesex Sessions, and at his brother's request my father instructed a solicitor to appear for him. Mrs W. R. Bradlaugh warmly expressed her gratitude to him for his kindness, hoping that some day she might be able to repay him; "Were it not for you," she said, "I do not know what I should do." Her husband, released on bail, protested that he would neither see nor speak to his brother until he had proved his innocence.

On the 8th of January my father wrote his sister, Mrs Norman, promising to allow his brother's wife a small weekly sum in the event of Robert's conviction, adding that they had already had £12, 10s. from him in six weeks. He was, as we know, himself so heavily involved in money difficulties that the smallest unforeseen expense made a serious addition to him; despite this, a week later he sent more money, and promised to pay the solicitor's costs. More, he vowed he would not do, "either for name or for money's sake." He felt the disgrace keenly, and considered moreover that his brother had no moral claim upon him, "for" as he wrote his sister, "when he was in full work, and I in distress, he did not even help me to keep his mother, who loved him so well." At the Middlesex Sessions a sentence of six months' imprisonment was passed, at the end of which Robert once more wrote his brother, thanking him for the kindness he had shown to his wife, and acknowledging his indebtedness to the extent of £30, which he

talked about repaying on some future occasion. At the same time he assured my father that his feelings should not again be harrowed by any misconduct on his (Robert's) part: henceforth his living should be honestly obtained, or he would starve.

My father sent his brother some more money. Then, of course, came other applications, coupled at length with the request that the money should be sent direct, and not, as was my father's custom, through his sister, Mrs Norman. But my father would not consent to this. He told his sister of Robert's demand, adding that if she would take charge of the money he would send what he was able; if she would not, he would send nothing. My aunt was perplexed; she did not know what to do. Although she had had her sister-in-law and the child at her house during Robert's absence, she had not seen her since his return, and she felt that she did not want to force her brother Robert to receive further kindness through her hands. However, she at last consented to continue to act as intermediary; consequently every penny that Mr Bradlaugh sent his brother passed through her hands.

Just before my father went to America, in the autumn of 1874, Robert (who, a few years later, alleged that in 1872 his brother cast him off) suggested that he should go to the States with him, and be introduced by him as a young man whom he had known for some time; but it is hardly necessary to say that my father did not acquiesce in this proposal. In the following year, while still receiving pecuniary assistance from his brother, Mr W. R. Bradlaugh attended some of Moody and Sankey's meetings, and there professed "conversion," although, as he was brought up and educated in the tenets of the Church of England, and was never at any time a Freethinker, it is difficult to understand from what he was converted. One day my Aunt Lizzie was somewhat surprised at receiving a visit from him. He had been to her house only a day or two before to receive a sovereign which my father had sent at his request, and she was not expecting to see him again so soon. He walked into the house, triumphantly exclaiming that he had got "another berth," at the same time showing her a sheet of the *Christian Herald* in connection with which he had been given employment.

From that day until my father's death his brother never ceased to try and annoy him—always, of course, under the cloak of religion and love. He would send him religious books—the last

came at the New Year of 1891. "This is from my beautiful brother," said my father, as he dropped it into the waste-paper basket. He sometimes lectured in the same town, on the same date as my father, and the hall engaged for his lectures would perhaps be quite close to the one in which Mr Bradlaugh was speaking. He would be announced, maybe, merely as "Mr Bradlaugh," or even as "the brother of Charles Bradlaugh," or "the brother of the Member for Northampton," and would very likely entreat his audience to unite with him in prayer for his "brother Charles Bradlaugh." He had named his son "Charles," and in a letter written to his brother in 1880, he had recourse to the following unmanly taunt: "I want not to trade upon your name; it has never helped me, it dies with yourself, and is to be perpetuated by the son of one whom you at present hate." My father's own son, who also bore his name and of whom he had been so proud, had then been dead ten years.

Mr W. R. Bradlaugh did not confine himself to these annoyances—which, after all, were petty, and even if they irritated at the time, could be easily endured—but he has been responsible for various false and injurious statements concerning my father's personal character. Some of these were circulated during his lifetime, but he remained silent with every provocation to speak. Even in a "private and confidential" letter to the editor of a friendly paper which had carelessly quoted some extremely malicious falsehoods alleged to have been uttered by Mr W. R. Bradlaugh, my father only said that, "being under great obligation" to him, his brother tried to injure him.

This is the second time in this book that I have been compelled to reveal a story of sorrow and disgrace that I would have given much to have kept hidden, but justice to my father demands that the truth should be known. If the telling it should bring the smallest injury to a man who, twenty years ago, erred and expiated his error according to the laws of our country, it will give me the deepest pain and regret. Counting surely on my father's silence, however, he chose to pursue a course of conduct which has obliged me to tell the truth concerning their estrangement. Out of regard for his brother, my father might knowingly and deliberately suffer himself to be misunderstood, and his silence to be unfavourably construed, but it is not for me, his faithful daughter and biographer, to allow the misunderstanding to continue.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REPUBLICANISM AND SPAIN.

As I have said elsewhere, during the early seventies the Republican movement in England was full of life and activity. There was quite a ferment of political energy tending towards Republicanism, and this seemed to be most active in 1873, after the temporary check felt in the reaction of loyalty evoked by the Prince of Wales' illness. In February 1871, the first of a series of Republican Clubs was inaugurated in Birmingham by Mr C. C. Cattell, and this was followed by the formation of others in every direction. By the spring of 1873 there were clubs in Aberdeen and Plymouth, in Norwich and Cardiff; and between these extremes were to be found more than fifty others, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Northumberland having perhaps the largest number. These Clubs held their periodic meetings, and the addresses delivered were often thought of sufficient importance to be reported in the local press. It may well be asked, What has become of all this Republican fervour? It is difficult to say. Probably much of the energy and activity has been diverted into other channels, but, however that may be, we see little sign of it now: in 1894 England is to all appearance utterly dead to the aspiration of an ideal Republic. But in the early part of 1873 the Republican movement was believed to be a growing one, and it was deemed advisable to call a Conference with a view of establishing a National Republican Organisation, which should unite all the heretofore scattered clubs. A circular was sent out by the Provisional Committee convening the meeting, signed by Mr George Odger and eleven others, of whom Mr Bradlaugh was one. Seeing my father's name amongst the signatures, an endeavour was made to injure the cause of Republicanism by denouncing the conveners as "Atheists," although, as a matter of fact, the majority were Christians. The conference was fixed for the 11th and 12th

of May, and the use of the Town Hall, Birmingham, was granted for the meetings.

Shortly before this date the Republic had been declared in Spain, and some of the English Clubs at once sent their congratulations to Senor Castelar. In addition to these, it was decided to send a resolution from the Birmingham Conference, expressing sympathy with Spain in her struggle to establish a Republican Government, abhorrence at the atrocities committed by the Carlists, in the interests of a Monarchical Government, and indignation at the non-recognition of the Spanish Government by the British Government. A resolution was also put to the great public meeting, held in the Town Hall on the Monday evening. This message of sympathy, which was passed with the utmost unanimity, in a meeting of fully 4500 persons, was, together with the Conference resolution, entrusted to Mr Bradlaugh to carry to Senor Emilio Castelar. The proceedings at Birmingham caused considerable stir; the local papers gave long reports, and notices appeared in different journals throughout the provinces, and even in Conservative London itself. The impression created by this quiet and business-like demonstration may be gathered from a leader which appeared in the *Examiner* for May 17, of which the following is a short extract:—

"The Conference of Republicans held at Birmingham on Sunday and Monday last far exceeded in numbers, importance, as well as in the intelligence displayed by its members, anything of a similar name or nature that has been held since the present movement was first originated. There were fifty-four accredited delegates present, representing nearly as many of our principal towns, and they came from every point of the compass—from Norwich, from Bath, from Hastings, Paisley, and Aberdeen. The proceedings were marked by singular unanimity, and general abstinence from all hasty and ill-advised language. This, the least expected feature of the Conference, is doubtless deeply regretted by its opponents. To openly avow Republican proclivities is, in the minds of a majority of the 'respectable' classes, almost synonymous with calling yourself an advocate of rick-burning, or any other mad devilry; the Conference will go far towards removing this ridiculous impression, and re-assuring the timorous. But it must be admitted that a party that can afford to speak in the moderate but decisive tones adopted by most of the speakers, convinces us, and, we would fain believe, all thinking persons, far more of its reality and permanence than had it indulged in the most savage braggadocio or bombast."

That same Monday night, with the vote to Senor Castelar in his pocket, and with the cheers of the crowd ringing in his ears, Mr Bradlaugh left Birmingham for London, where he arrived at five o'clock on Tuesday morning. To drive to his Turner Street lodgings, to wash, pack, breakfast, write some pressing notes, glance at thirty letters, then to Cannon Street to catch the 7.40 A.M. mail train to Dover was fairly quick work, but it was accomplished, and he found himself in Paris the same evening. Dining at the Orleans Station that night, he found Gambetta, with half-a-dozen friends whom he was seeing off to Bordeaux, dining at a table quite near to him. Referring to this incident, Mr Bradlaugh noted that "*Le Diarias*, of Madrid, says that in passing through Paris I had a long conference with Monsieur Gambetta. This, like most newspaper paragraphs about me, is a pure invention." Mr Bradlaugh published an account of his journey to Spain in the *National Reformer* at the time. Much of it—which he called "A fortnight's very rough notes"—was written while on his journey, and must have been done under very considerable difficulties. In carrying the message of the English to the Spanish Republicans, he went at the imminent risk of his life. In Paris and in London it was currently reported that he was killed. While he was cut off from all communication with us, we endured an agony of suspense—my mother and I at Midhurst, my sister at school in Paris; we read in the papers that he was dead, and received letters of condolence from different quarters. Indeed, at Midhurst our first intimation of his supposed death was a letter of sympathy to my mother, written by the Rev. A. J. Harrison, Mr Bradlaugh's oft-time opponent in debate.

My father gives so vivid a description of his adventures and his impressions in his "very rough notes" that I give them in his own words:—

"At 8.15 [Tuesday evening] I started for Spain, my hopes of a direct journey through that country being a little cooled by the fact that although the Spanish Consul-General had positively assured me that the line was clear to Madrid, the Railway Company refused to book me further than Irun, a small town on the banks of the River Bidassoa, and just over the French frontier. All information, however, as to the state of the Spanish lines was refused, ignorance being pleaded." At Bayonne, "while waiting

at the station, I was amused by two Spanish 'gentlemen,' who, after looking carefully at every passenger, came up to me and inquired if I was the bearer of letters for Marshal Serrano. Curiously enough, Marshal Serrano, whose ambition seems doomed to just disappointment, had just fled from Spain in a vessel from Santander. I replied in the negative, and the two, whom I presume to have been Spanish detectives, remained watching until the train left Bayonne. At Irun my troubles commenced: the railway line was completely cut, and I must either take to the road or turn back. The road was said to be extremely dangerous, for it was in this district that the vicious and bloodthirsty curé of Santa Cruz had his band. Some assured me that the Carlists—who, all agreed, had possession of nearly the entire Basque district—would not interfere with either English or Americans. Others were equally certain that the priest of Santa Cruz would show no mercy to either if he happened to be in a murdering humour. Everybody advised me not to go alone; but when I found that the only vehicles for more than two persons were some dirty, ricketty, awful-smelling omnibuses drawn by nearly broken-down hacks, in which—the direct route being impossible—nearly twenty miles must be done, at least, in a burning heat, through a dangerous district, before better conveyance could be got, I determined to risk the journey by myself. I hired a small open *calèche*, with two good horses, and having emphatically explained to the driver that if he stopped voluntarily on meeting with any Carlists I should fire at him, I cocked my revolver, laid it on my knees, and off we went at a sharp gallop, which scarcely ever slackened until we reached San Sebastian. We drove often close to the railway, which I found had been cut in many places; the telegraph wires were hanging loose and useless, many of the posts hewn in two. Two or three times my driver turned to me and said, 'Los Carlistos,' pointing to some men in blue carrying guns and hurrying across the field towards us. Our rate, which on these occasions he accelerated by sharp whipping, carried us on without encounter. Passing near a village on the River Bidassoa, about midway between Irun and San Sebastian, some very rough and ragged-looking men ran up to the carriage, and one, armed with a long knife in his sash, got hold of the door, and addressed me in Basque; but as I did not understand a word, I simply pointed the

pistol at his head and waved him sharply away. My driver continued to gallop, whipping his horses, and the other men who shouted to the driver, apparently to stop, having fallen in the rear, my friend with the knife, who appeared a little out of breath and not to like the look of the pistol barrel, followed their example. When we got about two miles ahead, my driver explained to me in French that these were only thieves, and not Carlists. I had afterwards reason to doubt whether this was not a distinction without a difference. The man who drove me into San Sebastian refused to go any further, alleging that between San Sebastian and Vittoria the road was too dangerous. Finding that it was a thirteen hours' ride, and that the necessary relays of horses and oxen for the mountains were prepared, and could only be obtained for the diligence which started at four next morning, I at once booked a place for the *coupé* of an antiquated machine, which appeared to have lain by ever since the introduction of railroads, and to have been dragged out hastily, and without repairs, in consequence of the sudden interruption of the railway traffic. The clerk who took my money quietly told me that the proprietors could not be responsible for my luggage. . . . At three o'clock on Thursday morning I was awakened out of a terribly sound sleep, for, not having been in bed since Sunday night, Nature had overcome will; I was more fatigued than I had imagined. At a quarter to four I was seated in the diligence, heavily freighted with luggage, with one fellow-passenger in the *coupé* [Senor Everisto de Churruca, a Spanish civil engineer, who not only spoke French but Basque], four in the interior, and three in the *banquette*, or open-hooded seat behind the driver. All these passengers, except one, we dropped at early stages of our journey. The first steep hill we went down at a gallop; but our breaks, old and rusty, would not work; the almost overweighted diligence swerving to and fro—and if we had had a bishop on board we must have capsized; as it was, your light-hearted servant just saved his neck. The diligence came to a standstill at the bottom of the hill, and after great shouting some olive oil was procured, and the screw was twisted backwards and forwards until it forgot its rust in its unwonted oil bath. Again we started, this time at even a greater pace, to make up for lost time. . . .

"The first bodily testimony of the fear of the Carlists was at Tolosa, an old Spanish city, Mauresque in its surroundings, which

was fortified with wooden stockades fitted with loopholes for guns. It was well garrisoned with a few regular troops and provincial militia. The volunteers were, on the whole, a soldierly-looking body of men. At Allegria the Town Hall or Public Court House was fortified by the doors and windows being blocked up with rough stones coarsely mortared in, the necessary loopholes being left for firing through. This being in the centre of the town evidenced the fear that the outer works might not be strong enough to resist the Carlist assailants. Between Allegria and Villafranca I came upon a shocking sight. The Carlists had cut the line close to the mouth of a railway tunnel, which they had also partially blown up. The next train from San Sebastian came on with its usual freight of peaceful ordinary passengers, and no friendly warning was given to stay the mad, confiding rush into the arms of death. Two carriages over the side of the embankment, and the guard's van smashed underneath, three carriages on the line crushed into one another, still are there, with the ghastly, sickening, dull, dried traces on them to show how well the bloody work was done. And these are Carlist doings—work by followers of the Divine-right-Bourbon! Prayers are said for these infamous scoundrels in Paris, and subscriptions are advertised for them in the London *Times*. If they had been Communists instead of Carlists, what then? . . . .

"At Beasain I found that the fine railway bridge was cut by the Carlists, several feet being taken out of the flooring on either side, so that any train coming might be utterly dashed to pieces in a leap to the depths underneath. When coming near Zumarraga we had two yoke of oxen added to our horses, to drag us up the steep hillside, our ascent being upon one of the small range of mountains that apparently link on to the Pyrenees. Here I began to think the danger was passed, as we found men engaged in repairing the permanent way, although the strong guard of soldiers protecting the workmen showed that this was not quite the opinion of the authorities.

"At Mondragon a new style of fortification met my view. All these cities are built with very narrow streets, and here, in the centre of the principal street, a chamber had been run across from window to window of opposite houses, built shot-proof, and loopholed each side and underneath. This clearly proved that in this neighbourhood the Carlists were looked upon as likely to enter the

town itself. At Arichavaletta, where the regular troops were stronger than usual, I was much puzzled by the conduct of the sentries, who first signalled us to stop, and who—when the horses were pulled up to a walk—crossed bayonets to prevent our progress. It turned out that the Commanding Officer had broken his meerschaum pipe, and our important mission was actually to take it to Vittoria to be mended. More fortunate than some of the baggage we carried, it actually arrived at its destination. At Ezcarriaza, a small open town where we made our last change of horses, I noticed that most of the houses were deserted, and the doors and shutters fastened. The remaining inhabitants stared at us with a pitying kind of curiosity, as though they knew not what fate was in store for us. Candidly speaking, as we had now safely done more than four-fifths of our journey to Vittoria, I began to think that there was now scarcely any risk, and the more especially so as all advices of the Carlists placed them much to the north of where we then were. My judgment was inaccurate; the sting of the serpent was in its tail, the last fifth part of our journey was worse than all the rest. When we arrived at the *Cuesta de Salinas*, where two roads branched off, a rather good-looking young man, in a blue cap and blue blouse sort of uniform, armed with a rifle, a revolver in his sash attached by a ring to a cord slung round his neck, and with a bayonet sword by his side, waved his hand to our driver in the direction of the lower road. This road our diligence now took, our driver saying something we could not hear, and my companion adding to me, 'At last, the Carlists!' About half a mile further, up started in the middle of the road as rough a specimen of the human family as one could wish to meet. Armed and dressed like the previous one, he evidently called on our driver to halt, and as the diligence came to a standstill, two others, worse dressed and badly armed with indifferent guns, joined the first, and I cocked my revolver, keeping it however underneath my coat. Our driver chatted to the Carlists familiarly in the Basque tongue, but too low for my fellow-traveller to catch a word. The last of the Carlists who appeared was probably a deserter, as he wore part of the uniform of a private of the Twenty-ninth Regiment. Whether the three did not feel strong enough to attack us, or whether, as is more likely, they had orders to let us pass into the trap carefully laid at the other end of the road, I do not know; what is certain is, that again our driver gathered up the

reins, and away we galloped. I uncocked my pistol, and began to believe that the Carlists were a much maligned body of men. About a mile further, a house still in flames, with traces of a severe struggle close to it, again awakened our attention, and in the distance blue uniforms could be seen.

"At the *fuente de Certaban*, close to Ullsbarri Gamboa, in the province of Alava, we fairly fell into the Carlists' hands, like fish taken in a net. A party of twelve stopped the roadway, while two kept sentry on the heights close to the road, and some others, whom we could not see but whom we could hear, were close at hand. Our driver descended, and his first act was to give the leader of the Carlist party an ordinary traveller's satchel bag with shoulder-strap, which had evidently been brought intentionally from one of the towns we had passed, and which seemed to give pleasure to the recipient, who at once donned it, two or three admiringly examining it. Approaching me, the leader then asked, in the name of his Majesty Carlos VII., in a mixture of French and Spanish, if I had anything contraband? Unacquainted with the tariff regulations of this Bourbon bandit chief, I gave a polite negative, and was about to descend from the *coupé* to see more accurately our new visitors, when, on a signal from the chief, they all laid their guns against a bank, one of the sentries descending to stand guard over the weapons. Curious guns they were—English Brown Bess, old Prussian muzzle-loader, ancient Italian regulation muzzle-loader, converted breech loader, and blunderbuss, were represented. All who wore revolvers had new ones, perhaps bought by the funds subscribed by the London Committee.

"The diligence, which only contained one passenger besides myself and Senor de Churruca, was now literally taken by storm; and at present, seeing that there were no signs of fighting, I preserved an armed neutrality, keeping my revolver cocked, but still carefully out of sight under my coat, only moving the pistol-case on the strap, so as to have it ready for almost instantaneous use. The first search appeared to be for letters, and I began to quake for one directed in Mr Foote's* best handwriting to Senor Castelar, and of which I was the bearer. I soon found that only the chief could

* Mr Foote was Secretary to the Committee convening the Republican Conference.

read at all, and I much doubt if he could read anything but print. The principle of natural selection seemed governed by the appropriation of thick and large epistles; and even these, after being turned about, were restored to the driver, who, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, looked on as though he had but little concern in the matter.

"Presently a cry of triumph came from the top of the diligence. Thinking it was my poor black bag containing the Castelar letter, I pressed forward, but was stopped, and a sentry placed in charge of me. His gun was a treasure, and I consider that if he had meant shooting, there would have been nearly as much danger in the discharge to the shooter as to the shot. The triumphal shout had been caused by the discovery of two saddles and bridles, which were at once confiscated by his Majesty's customs collectors as contraband, and despite an energetic protest from the conductor, were carried off behind the rising ground. The next thing seized was a military cap in its oilskin case; uncovered, it was a thing of beauty—a brigadier's cap, thickly overlaid with silver lace. The Carlist commander took possession of this with almost boyish delight, giving his own cap to one of his followers, who had hitherto been decorated with a dirty rag for head-piece. The oilskin covering of the new cap was thrown to the ground, and one of the band, who seemed to have a sudden attack of madness, drew his bayonet and rushed at the poor cover, furiously digging the bayonet through and through, and crying out in Basque that he wished that he had the nigger, its master, there to serve in the same manner. Suddenly and menacingly he turned to me, and angrily asked in Basque whether the cap was mine. When Senor de Churruca translated this into French, it was too much for my gravity, already disturbed by the mad onslaught on the unoffending oilskin. My thick skull is of tolerably large size, this cap was small enough to have perched on the top of my head. My reply was a hearty laugh, and it seems to have been the best answer I could have made, my interlocutor grinning approbation. Bayonets were now called into work to break open the portmanteaus of which the owners were absent, and also to open certain wooden cases containing merchandise belonging to the third passenger. Boots appeared to be contraband of war, and liable to instant confiscation. One pair of long cavalry boots did us good service, for the chief determined to get into them at once, and

luckily they were so tight a fit that they occupied his time and attention for nearly twenty minutes, during which period the searchers came to my black bag, and found the official-looking envelope containing the vote of sympathy from the Birmingham meeting. As I was in a Catholic country, and the Carlists were pious Catholics, I adopted the views of the equally pious Eusebius, and shouted lustily, '*Io Inglese, esta mia passeporta.*' The man who held it looked at it, holding the writing upside down, and returned it to its place. Fortunately I had no spare boots, and my Carlist friends had no taste for shirts, so I got leave to fasten up my bag. My fellow-traveller, who had a fine military-looking appearance, and who had just come from Porto Rico, underwent a searching cross-examination, and I began to think he was to be walked off into the mountains. Fortunately, he not only talked Basque well, but had considerable presence of mind, and after exchanging cigars with the second in command (the first was still struggling into his boots, one of which resolutely refused to go on), he was allowed to move about uninterfered with. No. 3 passenger was in sore trouble; he had about thirty umbrellas, and was required to pay 2½ reals for each, and also duties on some other articles, which he said amounted to more than their value. Senor de Churruca expostulated with the Carlists in their native tongue, while I reasoned with passenger number three in French. His difficulty was very simple: the Carlists wanted more money than he had got, and he looked bewailingly at his broken boxes and soiled goods. I got him to offer about thirty pesetas; these were indignantly refused, violent gesticulation was indulged in, our driver now really taking active part on our side, but occasionally breaking off and running up to the top of the nearest hill, as though looking for some one. At last the guns were picked up and pointed at us, everybody talked at once, and it looked as if it would come to a free fight after all, when suddenly some cry came from a distance—at first faintly, then more clearly; and whether some other prey approached, or whether the soldiers were coming along the road we had left, I know not, but number three's pesetas were hurriedly taken, and this sample of the army of Carlos VII. hastily disappeared, leaving us the unpleasant task of repacking the luggage on the diligence as best we could, with the cords which they had recklessly cut when too hurried to untie. Senor de Churruca stated that the Carlists claimed to have no less

than 3000 men well armed in the Montanas de Arlaban, round which the road passed, of whom 500 they said could be brought on the spot by signal in a few minutes. We resumed our route, pleased and disgusted—pleased at our lucky escape, and disgusted because the more than two hours and a half's delay would render us too late for the night express to Madrid.

"The road, too, was now more dangerous for the horses, as the telegraph wires lying across the road in curls made traps for their legs, and driving at a gallop was occasionally difficult. At last we came in sight of Vittoria. Outside, in the road, we came across a large body of armed regulars playing pitch and toss, and next a volunteer, in full equipment, driving a pig." From Vittoria "at eleven on the morning of Friday we started for Miranda, the train being escorted by nearly a regiment. The first railway station after leaving Vittoria—Nanclares—had been turned into a veritable fortress by hastily constructed stone barricades, and was full of troops; but we had no novelties until we reached Miranda at 1·30, except that an officer of the 12th Regiment had with him a little baby about twelve months old. Strange baggage in time of war! At the stations a private came and nursed it. I dared not make any inquiry as to his little companion, fearing I might give offence." At the Miranda station a couple of detachments of prisoners were brought in, of all ages from twelve to sixty-five. "The whole of these prisoners were to be sent to Cuba, to fight there for the Government against the Cuban insurrectionists. I could not help thinking that this practice of expatriating these Carlists was as impolitic as it is most certainly illegal. The practice was commenced by Senor Zorilla, and the present ministry have unfortunately followed in his footsteps." Between Miranda and Burgos four railway stations burned to the ground showed where the Carlists had been. "From Burgos I had a weary night's ride to Madrid, morning dawn showing me, on the left of the line, about twenty miles from the capital, the famous Escorial, chronicled amongst the wonders of the world. Just after, in a deep cutting through the rocks near Las Rozas, we pulled up with a sudden jerk and jump, which threw us off our seats. On descending hastily from the train, I found that these priest-ridden Carlist savages had planned here our total destruction. Some wood and iron had been fixed in two places on the rails, and an empty rubbish truck had been turned upside down right on our

track. Fortunately our train kept the rails, and although mischief was done to the engine, we all escaped unhurt, save for a rough shaking. A few of us hastily climbed the rocks, and I confess it was almost a disappointment to find no one in sight. I felt in my anger a desire to take vengeance with my own hand. If the train had gone off the line, we should have been pounded against the rocks, and nothing could have saved the bulk of us from death or frightful injury."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MADRID AND AFTER.

On arriving at Madrid, Mr Bradlaugh waited upon Senor Castelar at the Government Palace, Plaza de Oriente, where he was officially received, and whence a few days later came a fairly lengthy official document, addressed to Mr R. A. Cooper, as Chairman of the Birmingham Conference, which was as remarkable for its eloquence as for its moderation. From Madrid he went to Lisbon, by way of Cuidad Real and Badajoz, the journey taking thirty-six hours by "express" train. His visit to Lisbon was upon private business: he particularly desired to learn something concerning a Portuguese gentleman, the Baron Geraldo F. dos Santos, with whom he had been connected in 1867 in the Naples Colour Company, and who had in the October of that year "gone to Lisbon," leaving "no orders," as was tersely written upon a bill for three hundred pounds when it became due. The noble Baron who should have met it had returned to his native land, leaving it to be met by my father, whose name was on the back of the bill.

My father did not stay many hours in Lisbon, but while he was there a curious little incident happened. Going into a tobacconist's to buy a cigar, he asked for it in French, thinking that more likely to be understood than English. The mistress of the shop smiled, and answered him in his own tongue, addressing him by name. She was an Englishwoman, and knew him well, having heard him lecture at the provincial town where she had lived in England.

About the 22nd Mr Bradlaugh was back again in Madrid; on the 23rd he received the official reply to Mr Cooper, and also the following unofficial communication:

"Ministerio de Estado,
"Gabinete Particular.

"Monsieur Bradlaugh.

"Monsieur,—En réponse à votre lettre de ce matin je vous prie de vouloir bien m'attendre chez vous aujourd'hui entre deux et

trois heures. J'aurai alors le plaisir de vous voir et je pourrai vous donner des renseignments rélatifs à votre voyage.

"Agrécz, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

"[Signed] EMILIO CASTELAR." *

"Madrid, le 23 Mai."

On the following day (Saturday) a banquet was given by the Madrid Republicans to Mr Bradlaugh at the Café Fornos, at which about eighty persons, including many leading Spanish Republicans, were present. There had been a loud demand for a banquet in the open air, and many hundreds of applications were received for tickets. The time at Mr Bradlaugh's disposal, however, was too short to allow of arrangements being made for a banquet upon such an extensive scale, and it was necessary to limit it to more modest proportions.

The invitation to this banquet was signed by the Alcade, Pedro Bernard Orcasitas, on behalf of the City of Madrid; by Francisco Garcia Lopez, the newly elected deputy for Madrid; by the famous Francisco Rispa Perpina, the President of the Federal Centre; by Juan N. de Altolaguirre, on behalf of the Republican Federal Centre; by Manuel Folgueras on behalf of the Provincial Deputies; and by a General and a Colonel commanding the Republican Volunteers.

At seven in the evening the Alcade came in person to Mr Bradlaugh's hotel to escort him to the Café Fornos. At the dinner the chair was taken by Senor Garcia Lopez, and the *New York World* gave a full report of the speeches delivered. Mr Bradlaugh spoke in English, but his speech was translated by Senor Eduardo Benot, Secretary to the Cortes, who in his official capacity had, with his colleague, Senor Pedro Rodriguez, signed the orders, first for Isabella, and then for Amadeus, to quit Spain. The banquet

---

* "MINISTERIO DE ESTADO,
"GABINETE PARTICULAR.

"Mr Bradlaugh.

"SIR,—In reply to your letter of this morning, I would ask you to kindly await me at your hotel to-day between two and three o'clock. I shall then have the pleasure of seeing you, and I shall be able to give you information relating to your journey.

"Accept, Sir, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

"EMILIO CASTELAR.

"Madrid, May 23rd."

came to an end about half-past eleven, and so great was the enthusiasm that all the guests escorted the English Republican back to his hotel, where deputation after deputation waited upon him until half-past two in the morning. In the street without, a vast but orderly crowd waited patiently for a chance to see or hear the hero of the hour, and during the whole time music was played by the bands of the Engineers and the Artillery, specially sent by the Minister of War. At length, after repeated entreaties, Mr Bradlaugh said a few words in French from the balcony of the hotel to the enormous throng below. Thanking the people of Madrid from his heart for the great kindness shown him, he wished them peace, prosperity, and order, winding up with the cry, "Vivad la Republica Espanola." Then, as it was reported, "amidst loud and repeated 'Vivads,' the crowd peacefully retired, the ladies quitted the balconies, and at three o'clock Madrid went to bed just as the sun's first rays tried to overclimb the line of night." Mr Bradlaugh himself went to his pillow with the reflection that he had that night shaken hands "with at least eight hundred people."

On Sunday he started on his return journey, but a letter from Senor Castelar took him once more to his house before he left. Castelar wrote :—

"Madrid, le 25 de Mai.

"Mon cher Bradlaugh,—Je vous prie d'etre chez moi a deux heures precis. Tout a vous, E. Castelar." *

This note was written in Castlelar's own hand, and is—as I give it—quite innocent of accents. The letter of the 23rd was written by a secretary and signed by Senor Castelar. These little notes are only important as witnesses to the friendly way in which Mr Bradlaugh was treated whilst in Madrid, there having been many assertions to the contrary, and Castelar himself having stated *since my father's death* that he "sent a message by a trusty emissary, requesting him not on any account to call on me at the Foreign Office, but to come and see me at my house, alone, and at an early hour in the morning, rarely chosen for visits in Madrid, where few

* "Madrid, May 25th.

"My Dear Bradlaugh,—I pray you to come to my house at two o'clock precisely.—Yours, E. Castelar."

people are early risers."* The welcome given to Mr Bradlaugh in Madrid provoked a stupid exhibition of rage and spite in certain quarters in England; and amongst the many fictions circulated at the time it was said that Senor Castelar would not see him at his official residence, and refused to receive the Birmingham vote except at his private house. Mr Bradlaugh corrected this preposterous falsehood at once.

"The vote was addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs," he said, "and I delivered it at the Ministry in the Palace, and received the answer officially from the Ministry. It is perfectly true that Senor Castelar invited me to his private residence, where I went, and passed some hours with him on three separate occasions, and that he did me the honour to visit me at my hotel; but these interviews, while I much valued them and am extremely pleased they took place, were unsought by me. The only visit I volunteered was the official one to the Ministry of State, and there is no pretence for saying that there was any reluctance to receive me."†

Mr Bradlaugh's return from Madrid occupied even longer time than the getting there. Although he left Madrid on Sunday, it was not until late on Friday night that he reached Paris, and in the meantime all sorts of rumours as to his death or capture had appeared in the French and English press. He delayed twenty-four hours in Paris in order that he might see his elder daughter, who was there at school, and some French friends, all of whom were in the greatest anxiety as to his fate. He arrived in London on Sunday morning, and in the evening lectured at the Hall of Science in reply to a speech delivered by the Bishop of Lincoln at Gainsborough upon the Inspiration of the Bible. The audience awaiting him had gathered together full of doubt and uneasiness, and the relief they felt was expressed by the vehement cheering, again and again renewed, which greeted his appearance as he entered the hall.

The story of his return journey we have in his own words.

"Favoured by Senor Castelar," he said, "with special aid in returning, we—that is, myself and a Government courier, with

* *Cardiff Weekly Mail*, February or March 1891.

† *National Reformer*, June 15, 1873.

despatches for Paris and London—left Madrid for our homeward journey on the afternoon of Sunday, May 25th. At the urgent request of many of those who had taken part in the demonstration of Saturday, I at the last moment determined not to return by the route I had come, and this determination was confirmed by the certain news that all the passes, either across the Pyrenees or by Salinas, were well occupied by the Carlists, who did not intend to let me slip easily through their fingers. I have no ambition to be a martyr, and determined not to be caught if I could avoid it." His return route was now planned to go *via* Santander and Bordeaux. "At Palencia," he continued, "where we arrived about three A.M., we received as escort some three hundred men of, I think, the Thirty-sixth Regiment. They came to parade after great delay, and in a manner showing great lack of discipline. I noticed that Pina and Espinosa were strongly guarded, and as soon as we passed between some of the hills near Alar del Rey, a sharp fusilade, which was returned from the train, wakened me from a half sleep, and gave me an occasion for smelling gunpowder, with an almost freedom of danger. Our train only went at about ten miles per hour, the engine-driver fearing to find the line torn up, or obstructions upon it; but fortunately for us, the party of Carlists by whom we were attacked were too late to hinder us, although I was informed that they succeeded in stopping the next train. The firing, sometimes sharp and sometimes interrupted entirely by the ravines, lasted about three-quarters of an hour. The Carlists were seen running down from the mountains to take part in the skirmish. The casualities were small, one soldier on our side being wounded in the shoulder. Not a single bullet entered the compartment in which I was seated.

"From Alar del Rey we passed through some beautiful country to Santander, where we arrived about five hours late, and in time to find that a steamer I had hoped to catch had left for Bayonne the night before my arrival. I went at once in a rage to the Government Offices, and was assured by the Captain-General of the port of Santander—who was the perfection of civility, and who stated that he had received a telegram from the Madrid Government to afford me every facility—that it would be impossible to leave for Bayonne before Thursday. This horrified me, for I was due to speak in Northampton on the 28th, and I at once rushed to the Telegraph Office to send a message. The clerk told me he

would take my money, but he would not ensure the delivery of my message. I was to return later to inquire. I left my money and my despatch, and went to the hotel to dine, or breakfast, or both in one. On returning to the Dispaccio Telegrafico, I learned that the wires were cut in more than one place; that the post-bags to the North were being seized by the Carlists; and that all means of communicating with my friends in England were temporarily cut off. To my disgust, I found that the boat for Bayonne, although advertised for Thursday, might not start till Sunday, and here I was, a prisoner at large in Santander, not even being able to return from thence to Vittoria, or to communicate my whereabouts to any one. . . . On Monday afternoon, while wandering about the streets, I came across a bill outside a shipping office headed 'Para Burdeos,' and not quite sure of my Spanish, or rather, being quite sure it would not do to trust to it, I went inside to inquire for some one who could talk French. The only person able to talk anything but Spanish was the principal, who turned out to be the same gentleman employed by Mr Layard, the English Ambassador at Madrid, to provide the steamer by which Marshal Serrano made his escape from Spain. I could not help wondering, when this shipowner, after closing, with an air of mystery, the sliding window communicating with the clerk's office, showed me the letters he had received from Mr Layard bespeaking the steamer, and from Marshal Serrano, thanking him after his escape. What would the English Government have said if the Spanish Ambassador in England had furnished one of the Fenian leaders with the means of escape from London to Southampton, and had there engaged him a steamer for Havre? Yet this is precisely what A. H. Layard did for Marshal Serrano last month in Spain. *Revenons à nos moutons;* I had rightly understood there was a steamboat, and 'a fine swift one,' announced to start for Bordeaux that evening. I wanted to embark at once, but found that some delay had taken place in the embarkation of the cargo, and the boat would not leave until two on Tuesday. But even this was comparative bliss; the boat was warranted to make the passage in twenty-four hours. I should be at Bordeaux at two on Wednesday; I should then be able to leave by the express train for Paris, get there on Thursday morning, perhaps catching the tidal train to London in time to encounter Father Ignatius at the New Hall of Science on Thursday evening. My spirits rose, and I

went back to the Fonda de Europa to sleep joyously till morning.

"Next morning I received news not so good. The captain of the vessel, the *Pioneer*, Captain Laurent, was staying in the same Fonda as myself; it was doubtful, he said, if he could weigh anchor before four or five. This was driving it very close for saving the train at Bordeaux; but worse news was to come: the boat did not start at all until Wednesday, and instead of doing the journey in twenty-four hours, it took nearer thirty-four hours, so that I ultimately arrived in Bordeaux towards midnight on Thursday, and naturally not in Paris until Friday night. . . . The good steamer *Pioneer* abounded in strange smells. The captain said it had never carried passengers before, and for the sake of the travellers I hope that she may never carry them again; but we (there were eight other passengers) made the best of our position, and bivouacked somehow with tarpaulin and sailcloth spread on the iron bottom of the hold; and except that in the Bay of Biscay the *Pioneer* sometimes suddenly put my head where my feet ought to have been, and then reversed the process with alarming sharpness, there was little to complain of."

Of course Mr Bradlaugh's journey was followed by the usual cry from those whose mercenary minds cannot conceive of a man doing anything he is not absolutely obliged except for the purpose of gaining some money reward. Just as earlier it had been said that he was paid by the Tories, or the Whigs, or the Communists, or some others equally probable, now the story was that he was paid by—of all people in the world—the Carlists!*

What Mr Bradlaugh thought of Senor Castelar will be a point of peculiar interest to those who have felt respect or admiration for both men. In narrating his Spanish adventures, my father uttered no set judgment on the Spanish statesman; he did not weigh him or criticise him, but here and there he alluded to this or that quality. "Of Senor Castelar himself," he said in one place, "it is difficult to speak too highly. . . . As an orator, he has no equal in Spain; and as a journalist, his pen has made itself a

* "We are informed, on what should be the very best authority, nevertheless we must refrain from guaranteeing the authenticity of the statement, that the expenses of the great Republican deputation from England to Spain was (*sic*) entirely defrayed by the Carlist Committee in London."—*Weekly Dispatch*, June 8th, 1873.

Transatlantic reputation." He then went on to enumerate some of the good works which Senor Castelar had inaugurated or in which he had taken part. Later on, speaking of the possibility of the maintenance of the Republican Government in Spain, Mr Bradlaugh said that there needed at the head of affairs "a Cromwell with the purity of a Washington. . . . Senor Castelar feels too deeply, and the pain and turmoil of Government will tell upon his health if he re-assumes power. He is honest and earnest and devoted to Republicanism, and withal so loving and lovable in his nature. I was present at breakfast with Senor Castelar when he received the telegraphic despatch announcing the fall of Monsieur Thiers, and the election of Marshal MacMahon as President. The news seemed to affect Senor Castelar very deeply. He evidently regarded it as paving the way for the accession of the Monarchical party in France, and consequently as giving encouragement to the Legitimist or Carlist party in Spain."

"Honest," "earnest," "loving and lovable,"*—all admirable qualities, not enough to make a Cromwell or a Washington, but nevertheless all very admirable. My father believed Senor Castelar possessed these, and from him I learned to admire and reverence him. Since my father's death I have had reason to doubt whether Castelar really possessed any one of these fine traits of character. At the risk of his life Mr Bradlaugh went to him to carry a message of sympathy and congratulation at a critical moment in his career; Senor Castelar received him with the utmost friendship and cordiality, and every honour was shown him during his few days' stay in Madrid. Having thus professed friendship to his face, Senor Castelar waited for eighteen years, and then, a few weeks after my father's death, he wantonly published † one of the most grotesque, one of the most foolishly malicious attacks upon Mr Bradlaugh that it would be possible for a sane man to pen.

---

* In New York Mr Bradlaugh afterwards spoke of Castelar as "one of the most honest, thorough, and loyal Republicans in Europe. Spain and the world should be proud of him."

† See *Cardiff Weekly Mail* and other English papers of this date.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GREAT GATHERINGS.

THERE will probably be many who remember the agitation there was in London when, at the end of the session of 1872, the Parks Regulation Bill was "smuggled" through the House of Commons, an agitation which did not subside until the Government announced that it would not seek to enforce the regulations before they had been ratified in the coming session by a vote of both Houses. This concession was regarded by many as a complete surrender to the Radicals, and equivalent to the handing over the four chief parks "to agitators, whenever they chose to take possession of them." In any case Mr Ayrton did not appear to regard the Government pledge as binding, for before long he posted the regulations in Hyde Park, and in November he caused Mr Odger and some ten or eleven others to be summoned as participators in a meeting held there in favour of the release of the Fenian prisoners. The case first taken was that of Mr Bailey, the chairman of the meeting, who, upon the hearing of the summons, was fined £5. As Mr Bailey's case was to decide the others, it was resolved that the magistrate's decision should be appealed against.

Mr Bradlaugh maintained that the Commissioner of Works had no power to make regulations without the sanction of Parliament, and immediately called a meeting of protest, to be held in Hyde Park on Sunday, December 1st. As there had been some disturbance at one of Mr Odger's meetings, as well as some threat of force to be used at his own, in his last notice convening the meeting my father specially asked that every one who went to the park should aid the stewards in preserving order.

Sunday December 1st came, and with it most inclement weather; but in spite of cold and rain and mud, thousands of men and women made their way to the trysting-place, which came well within Mr Ayrton's proscribed area. There were no bands

or banners, and the journeying of the people to the park was likened by Mr Austin Holyoake to "a pilgrimage of passion, all the more intense because subdued." At this meeting, characterised by the utmost unanimity, Mr Bradlaugh was the only speaker, and no other inducement was offered to people to come through all that dreary weather than that of uniting in a solemn protest against this infringement of the right of public meeting. "It is useless to blink facts," lamented one of Mr Ayrton's supporters,* "and it may as well be confessed that the assemblage was large, perfectly under control, and orderly, and composed of apparently respectable persons. These may be melancholy facts, but they are facts. . . . It was a dense assemblage, standing as closely as it could be packed, and extending over an area of more than an acre." Even the *Times* was impressed by the size, the orderly character of the gathering, and perhaps even more than all by the fact that those who came "without bands and banners, and marching through the streets," pledged nevertheless to maintain order, "and actually succeeded in no small degree in overawing the 'roughs' and thieves who congregate on these occasions." In continuation, the *Times* remarked that "Mr Bradlaugh, whose voice could be heard at a considerable distance, was listened to with great attention; he spoke throughout in terms of advice to the 'people' to preserve peace, law, and order."

When we find such reluctant witnesses speaking in such terms, one can form some idea of the size of the meeting and the spirit which animated it. It is to be regarded as not the least among my father's triumphs that he could always bring people together in vast numbers, with no other inducement than the justice of the cause which they had at heart. A little earlier in that very year George Odger had said in a letter to him: "It will be a grand day indeed when the Democrats of London are sufficiently organised as to be ready to march in their tens of thousands from all parts of London to the park or some other large place, inspired only by the conviction of right which the soundness of their principles must ultimately produce." This is exactly what happened at my father's meetings. He said: "Come, because it is right to come; come quietly, without clamour." He trusted the men and women with whom he was working; he knew that when they saw the

* *Scotsman*, December 2.

right, the cause alone would be sufficient to move them; they would want no other inducement. His trust was justified and reciprocated; the mass meetings which he called, and the control of which depended upon himself alone, were always great demonstrations, were always impressive, and were always perfectly orderly.

Notwithstanding this open defiance of his regulations, Mr Ayrton refrained from taking proceedings against either Mr Bradlaugh or any of those who took part in the meeting. And yet the magistrate's decision against Mr Bailey was confirmed on appeal by the Court of Queen's Bench, and the Treasury claimed costs against him. After some delay, however, this claim was abandoned by the Government, which, in the matter of these Parks Regulations, at least, does not seem to have distinguished itself by firmness or decision.

Another public meeting held that December furnishes a striking example of the way Mr Bradlaugh was looked upon as a pariah. My father, as is well known, attached much importance to the question of Land Law Reform, and was deeply interested in any measures that would tend to ameliorate the hard lot of those who live by the land. Hence, when a meeting was announced to be held in Exeter Hall, in connection with the Agricultural Labourers' Movement, he determined to be present. The chair was taken by S. Morley, Esq., M.P., who, himself a generous donor to the Agricultural Labourers' Fund, laid special stress on the necessity of giving substantial pecuniary help. The first resolution, moved by Cardinal Manning, ran thus: "That this meeting deeply sympathises with the Agricultural Labourers of England in their depressed circumstances, believing their present condition to be a disgrace to the best interests of the country, and is of opinion that measures should be adopted without delay for their social improvement and intellectual elevation." Mr Bradlaugh felt that this was at once very vague and very inadequate; it left the character of the "measures" to be adopted far too much to the imagination. Nor was the resolution made more clear by the speeches which followed from others, who, like Mr Arch and Mr Ball, eloquently as they spoke, failed to touch the vital causes of the miseries they deplored. Even the pecuniary help they were seeking, my father considered, would in itself but perpetuate troubles, unless the grievances themselves

were redressed. Under these circumstances, Mr Bradlaugh "felt bound to rise to move an addendum to the resolution." His rising was the signal for great excitement; a hawk in a dovecote could hardly have produced a greater flutter. "Some," said my father, "yelled lustily; Joseph Arch begged me as a favour 'not to irritate the kindly gentlemen disposed to aid the poor labourer,' and Mr Ball . . . said they did 'not want any political opinions which might prevent subscriptions to the movement.'" Archbishop Manning withdrew from the meeting as soon as the wicked Atheist came forward. I am in no position to say whether in this case *post hoc* meant *propter hoc*, though certainly in some quarters,* at least, the Archbishop's sudden disappearance was attributed to Mr Bradlaugh's appearance. Mr Samuel Morley asked Mr Bradlaugh not to move the addendum; my father, however, persisted. Mr Morley then asked him, "as a favour to himself, as it was then 10.32, not to speak in support." To this Mr Bradlaugh consented, while maintaining his right to speak, and merely moved that the following words be added to the resolution: "And there can be no permanent improvement in the condition of the agricultural labourer until such vital change shall be effected in the land laws now in force in this country as shall break down the land monopolies at present existing, and restore to the people their rightful part in the land." Had he been allowed to speak, he would have instanced as necessary "measures" abolition of primogeniture; easy land transfer; a graduated land tax, and compulsory cultivation of uncultivated lands capable of cultivation. This last reform he put elsewhere in the following words:—"Power to deprive holders of cultivable lands of their property, on proof of non-cultivation, at a compensation not exceeding seven years' purchase, calculated on the average nett rental of the preceding seven years. Such lands to be taken by the State, and let in small holdings to actual cultivators, on terms of tenancy, proportioned to the improvement made in value; that is, the greater the improvement, the longer the tenancy. Lands appropriated to deer forests and game preserves to be treated as non-cultivated."

Although Mr Bradlaugh's addendum was moved and seconded amidst the greatest confusion, and little as his intervention was

* See *Weekly Register* (Catholic) for Dec. 14, and *Liverpool Daily Post* for Dec. 13.

approved of by the promoters of the meeting, four-fifths at least of those assembled voted in its favour.*

But if my father felt wounded by the way in which he was regarded, and his help was rejected by the conveners and speakers of this Exeter Hall meeting, he had his compensation in the following July, when he was invited, for the first time, to attend the Annual Demonstration of the Northumberland miners. He had always felt especial sympathy for the workers in the northern coal mines, and never forgot that one of the earliest and one of the kindest greetings he ever received in the provinces was from a coal-hewer at Bebside. At this demonstration he met Alexander Macdonald, whom he then regarded as one of the strongest men he had yet come in contact with, connected with any working men's organization in Great Britain. "To give," he said, "a faint notion of Mr Macdonald's power, it is enough to point out that he speaks with the authority of Miners' Organizations representing more than 200,000 men, and has brain enough and will enough to use this vast power unflinchingly." Mr Thomas Burt, then Secretary to the Northumberland Miners' Association, and "proposed" miners' candidate for Morpeth, Mr Wm. Crawford from Durham, and Mr Joseph Cowen, as well as my father's old antagonist in debate, Dr J. H. Rutherford, all attended to address the great gathering, which assembled on the moor; and although this was the tenth of these annual gatherings, it was the first at which any political resolutions had been proposed.

* Commenting on this emendation, one provincial journal—the *Liverpool Daily Post*— remarked with more than usual outspokenness: "Thanks to Mr Carlyle, it has long been acknowledged that revolutions cannot be made with rose water; and Archbishop Manning and other amiable ecclesiastical philanthropists will have to learn that revolutions cannot be made with holy water either. In this world it is necessary to do good, even if the devil bids you; and if Mr Bradlaugh can get the ear and the vote of a vast meeting by turning half-measures into whole ones, his alliance will have to be accepted, and perhaps his advice may have to be followed." But the day for that was not yet come, and few saw the inevitable so clearly as Mr Bradlaugh. The *Times* very fairly admitted that on a division his supporters formed the majority of the gathering, but a very garbled account of the proceedings appeared in many journals, one paper even going to the length of saying that Mr Bradlaugh was "ejected" from the meeting, and another seriously admonishing him that his reception at Exeter Hall ought to show him that the bulk of the working classes had no confidence in him.

In the following year, when the Northumberland Collieries balloted for the speakers for their picnic, my father and Mr Burt came out side by side at the head of the poll. The date fixed was the fifteenth of June, and on that afternoon at least 20,000 miners assembled on Blyth Links. In the evening, in the Central Hall, an address was presented to Mr Bradlaugh on behalf of the Northumberland miners. In it was told their appreciation of the services he had rendered "the poor, the neglected, and the oppressed." It spoke of the prejudice against him on account of his opinions, but they were happy to affirm that "no such paltry feeling as this blinds the mining population of Northumberland to your deserts as a politician and a reformer. It may please you to hear, as it delights us to testify, that persons of all shades of opinion have combined in the present manifestation of approval and esteem." And indeed it appeared that Catholics, Wesleyans, Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians had all joined in presenting this address. As my father stood there that night, listening to the eulogistic speeches made about himself, and remembered how, but a few short years before, he was unable to obtain a lodging in that very town of Blyth, he fairly broke down. This address remained to the last one of his most treasured possessions, and always occupied the place of honour on his study wall. And the Northumberland miners were not less faithful than he. Year after year he was invited to their annual gathering,* and when he died, these poor men—who earn their wage under conditions often of the most frightful hardship—not only sent individual subscriptions towards the payment of the liabilities he had left behind him, but even voted £50 from their funds to the same object. And not only did they do that, but when his library was sold there were many who contrived to send the money to buy one or two books, so that they might possess some memento of the man whose eloquent tongue would speak to them no more.

In 1874 Mr Bradlaugh had his first invitation to the Durham

* In 1875 Mr Bradlaugh cancelled his acceptance of their invitation, because Dr Kenealy was also invited. During my father's absence in America Dr Kenealy had gone out of his way to make a most unprovoked attack upon himself, and to offer wanton insult to the Freethought party. Hence Mr Bradlaugh refused to be present on any platform with him, "except hostilely."

miners' (fourth) annual gala. Here, notwithstanding inclement weather and the difficulties put in the way of the meeting by the North-Eastern Railway Company, the gathering on the race-course was enormous; and although this was the first time he had come to their picnic, my father saw his own full-length likeness on the two banners belonging to the South Tanfield and West Auckland Collieries.* The evening, too, was made pleasant by the courageous avowal, in the presence of at least a dozen people, made by a gentleman of position and influence in Durham—a former mayor. He told my father that he was delighted to have the opportunity of seeing him, but he thought it only honest to add that before his (Mr Bradlaugh's) arrival he had refused to go upon the same platform with him. He had learned a lesson, he said, since he had been in my father's company.

As with the Northumberland men, so with the Durham: having once been invited to their picnic, Mr Bradlaugh was asked again and again, and in 1891 Durham miners also sent of their hard earnings towards the payment of a dead man's debts or to buy a book from his library.

At a monthly delegate meeting of the Yorkshire miners in 1874 Mr Bradlaugh's name was proposed as a referee in wages questions, but a delegate objected on the ground that he was an Atheist, and so the proposition was lost. Prejudice, however, did not carry all before it, for in the next year we find Mr Bradlaugh addressing the Yorkshire miners at Wakefield, and the Cleveland miners at Saltburn in 1876. Some years later I was with him when he addressed the Lancashire miners at a place near Wigan.

When the Somerset and Dorset agricultural labourers held their fourth annual gathering at Ham Hill, near Yeovil, in 1875, Mr Bradlaugh was invited to be present. The other speakers included Mr George Mitchell—"One from the Plough"—who was indeed the chief organiser of these meetings, Mr George Potter, Mr Ball, and Sir John Bennett, who evoked considerable indignation by his allusion to a suggestion said to have been made by

*The miners cannot be accused of concealing their opinions; in 1875 my father saw not only banners bearing likenesses of well-known miners' friends and himself, but also one which proudly displayed portraits of Ernest Jones, Feargus O'Connor, Henry Hunt, and Thomas Paine.

Dr Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, that if Mr Arch visited the labourers in his diocese he should be ducked in the horse-pond. But, above all, it was said, "the great incident of the meeting, creating the utmost excitement, was the appearance of Mr Charles Bradlaugh."* My father found the gathering very different from those to which he had been accustomed—gatherings of Londoners in Hyde Park, of miners in Northumberland, of Yorkshiremen, or of Lancashire factory hands; there were ten or twelve thousand persons present at Ham Hill, but until Mr George Mitchell began to speak he doubted whether many of them cared much for the serious objects of the meeting. The attention paid to Mr Mitchell's speech, however, and the applause with which it was greeted, gave a clearer indication of the real feeling which animated the labourers.

---

* *Weekly Dispatch*, 23rd May 1875.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

My father had many times been asked to go to America on a lecturing tour, but it was not until 1873 that he finally consented to do so. Then indeed he went, as he frankly said, in the hope of earning a little money, for there was so much that he wanted to be doing at home that, but for the ever-increasing pressure of debt, he would not have felt able to give the time for such a purpose. He visited America three times—in three consecutive winters—but although his lecturing met with enormous success, and he won friends amongst "all sorts and conditions of men," yet his fortunes received a check, of more or less severity, on each occasion. On every one of his visits something untoward happened; whether it took the form of an American money panic, an English election, or a serious illness.

These obstacles, unexpected and unavoidable, were over and above those prepared for him by the pious of various sects, from the Roman Catholic to the Unitarian, in the attempts to prejudice American opinion against him. As soon as it was fairly realised that Charles Bradlaugh was going lecturing in the States, the ubiquitous "London Correspondent" seemed to think it his duty to prepare the minds of his Boston or other American readers for the advent of their expected visitor, and each depicted him according to his fancy. The subjoined extracts will demonstrate not only the kindliness and veracity of the writers, but also the choice and elegant language in which they expressed their sentiments:—

I.—"You have heard of Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh is a creature six feet high, twenty inches broad, and about twelve thousand feet of impudence. He keeps a den in a hole-in-the-wall here, dignified by the title of the 'Hall of Science,' in which he holds forth Sunday after Sunday to a mob of ruffians whose sole hope after death is immediate annihilation. . . . The *Pilot*, if it can do nothing else, can warn our people from laying hands upon this uneducated ruffian—a trooper in a

cavalry regiment, a policeman, a bailiff's cud, a vagabond, and now a speculator in the easy infidelity of the States."*

II.—In England "practical politicians among the advanced liberal party avoid him as honest men avoid a felon, as virtuous women avoid a prostitute."†

On the 6th of September he left Liverpool for his first journey across the Atlantic by the Cunard steamship the *Scotia*, which arrived at New York on the 17th—a long passage, as it seems in these days when vessels make the journey in little more than half that time. He had been told of the insulting paragraphs so industriously circulated about himself, and he had so much at stake, that as the *Scotia* neared New York he felt oppressed with anxieties and nervousness as to what was in store for him in this yet untried land. From the very outset, however, he met with cheery welcome and friendly greeting. When he landed he presented his customs declaration in the usual way to the chief collector in order to get his baggage opened, but the collector surprised and pleased him by saying, "Mr Bradlaugh, we know you here, and the least we can do is to pass you through comfortably"—and he was passed through comfortably, for without more ado the chalk "sesame" was scrawled upon his portmanteau and rugs. He had barely established himself in his hotel when representatives from several New York journals came to interview him, and his arrival was advertised by the press to such an extent that within seven days of landing he had seen close upon three hundred newspaper notices of himself.‡

On the Saturday after his arrival he was invited to dine at the Lotos Club, where he received the warmest and most hospitable welcome, the Directory afterwards voting him the privileges of the Club during his stay in New York. A few days later he was asked to a reception given by the Lotos to Wilkie Collins. The guests were received by the President, Whitelaw Reid, and amongst them were Dr Ludwig Büchner and Bret Harte. Mr Bradlaugh

* *Boston Pilot*, August 2nd, 1873.

† *Boston Advertiser* (editorial), September (18-20) 1873.

‡ We have a fairly full record of these visits to the States in the weekly letters my father sent to the *National Reformer*, in addition to numerous newspaper reports and private correspondence. The weekly letters to the *National Reformer* gave much information as to labour questions in the various places visited by Mr Bradlaugh, and this was at the time of the utmost value, and greatly appreciated by his readers.

was called upon to speak, and I gather that he made a very favourable impression. O'Donovan Rossa called upon him soon after his arrival, and thanked him for his work for Ireland, and showed him several small courtesies. On Sunday the 28th he was received by the New York Positivists and welcomed in extremely kind terms by the President of the Society. The religious journals were greatly irritated at the attention paid to Mr Bradlaugh, and did not neglect to show it, one even refusing to insert the advertisement of his lectures sent by the advertising agency.

Misfortune met him within a few days of his landing in the shape of a financial panic of unusual severity, which, commencing in New York, spread through the States. Speaking of this panic in one of his earliest letters home, he says: "I entered the house of Henry Clews & Co., about five minutes after Jay Cooke and Co. had stopped payment. Then the excitement was not so great; people seemed stupefied with the incredible news, as Jay Cooke was a name like Baring and Rothschild. Later every one seemed to grow delirious, and crowds gathered round the doors of several banks, clamouring for admittance, the inside of each bank being already filled with anxious and angry people waiting to cash cheques, and doubting while they waited. On Friday things got worse, and the sight on Friday night, in the hall and reading room and smoking room of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, was something to remember. There was a dense mass of men, packed together—Jay Gould, Vanderbilt, Clews, and hundreds of others who had commenced the week with enormous fortunes, some entirely ruined in the last two days, and others not knowing whether or not bankruptcy awaited them in the morning. The *élite* of New York as seen in that seething crowd did not show to advantage; the Money Devil had gripped their entrails and disfigured their faces. On Saturday the President of the Republic arrived at the hotel in which I was staying, and then staircases, hall, corridors, smoking and reading rooms were besieged, and outside, in the streets, were carriages and uneasy waiters to gather scraps of news or comfort. I guess that very few went to church on Sunday, September 21st. On Sunday evening President Grant left for Washington, but the multitude did not decrease until midnight came. Each one who had seen or who had spoken to the President was waylaid, buttonholed, and became the centre of an eager group

of questioners. The trouble was so intense that the bankers, brokers, and railway contractors actually forgot whether they were well or ill dressed." These financial troubles greatly affected all lecturing engagements, as one might easily imagine, and Mr Bradlaugh in particular found his difficulties considerably increased by the suicide of his agent, whose affairs had become considerably involved in consequence of the panic.

His first lecture was given in the Steinway Hall at New York, on October 3rd. Considering the home troubles, the audience was a good one, one which he himself felt to be very remarkable. Amongst those present were many members of the Lotos Club, including their President, Whitelaw Reid, and D. J. Croly, "Jenny June," Colonel Olcott, General Kilpatrick, Andrew Jackson Davis, Theodore Tilton, Mrs Victoria Woodhull, O'Donovan Rossa, the Rev. O. B. Frothingham, Colonel Hay, Bret Harte, and Mr Andrews were also amongst his listeners. My father had been feeling very nervous about this first lecture. When he arrived in New York he was asked how long he expected to remain in America. "If I fail at Steinway Hall on October 3rd, I shall take the next steamer for England," was the reply. But there was no question of failure; he met with an immediate and wonderful success; his audience came to criticise and remained to applaud. In the papers of the following day his speech was greatly praised, and he himself pronounced one of "the greatest of living orators." The Brindley episode,* which by covering him with ridicule might have done him serious injury, was, by his coolness and quick wit, turned into a decided advantage. On the day after his lecture he had numerous kindly callers and congratulations. Amongst those who called was Mrs Victoria Woodhull, and Mr Bradlaugh's impressions of this much-talked-of lady are not without a certain interest. When Mrs Woodhull called he was talking to Stephen Pearl Andrews, the author of a learned book entitled "The Basic Outlines of Universology," and, "while chatting with Mr Andrews," said my father, "a slightly built lady entered, who was presented to me as Mrs Victoria Woodhull, the present President of the American Spiritualists, and advocate of very advanced doctrines on social questions. The energy and enthusiasm manifested by this lady in our extremely brief conversation

* See p. 160.

were marvellous; her eyes brightened, her whole face lit up, and she seemed all life. It would have been impossible to have brought together two persons more exactly opposite than Victoria Woodhull and Stephen Pearl Andrews—one all fire, the other all quiet thought; the one intent on active out-door war, the other content to work almost isolated in his closet on a huge book, which few can read and fewer still will care to read. Mrs Woodhull is evidently made for sharp strife of tongue and pen. Her face lights up with a beauty which does not belong to it ordinarily, but which gilds it as she speaks. Mr Andrews uses his pen only to note down the record of his thought, without the slightest regard to the never-ceasing strife around him. His forehead is marked with the furrows hard thinking has ploughed upon it. Many people here speak very bitterly against Victoria Woodhull; at present I prefer to take sides with none. It is enough to say that she is most certainly a marvellously audacious woman." Before he quitted New York for the New England States the Lotos Club gave him another dinner, at which he met Petroleum V. Nasby and Colonel John Hay.

In Boston, despite all the prejudices excited against him by the Boston papers, Mr Bradlaugh met with a really splendid reception. His first meeting was presided over by Wendell Phillips, who introduced him as "a man who, Sir Charles Dilke says, does the thinking for more minds, has more influence, than any other man in England;"* and who himself compared him with Samuel Adams, "the eloquent agitator, the most statesmanlike mind God lent New England in 1776." Boston people remarked that the audience was a curious one, unusual to the regular lyceum lectures. It included many cultivated people, many scholarly and solid men, many accomplished and delicate women, but in addition to these, who were customary attendants at lecture courses, there was an unusually large number of young men present, and more remarkable still was the large attendance of working men, the whole forming a "strangely composite" but wonderfully sympathetic audience. On the platform were Charles Sumner, who, at the close of the address, spoke words of warm encouragement to my father; William Lloyd Garrison, who cheered him repeatedly; and other prominent Boston men.

* This saying, attributed to Sir Charles Dilke, was given on the authority of Mr Jenkins, author of "Ginx's Baby," who had lately been in Boston.

The next day, with Wendell Phillips and George Julian Harney as guides, he visited the different places of interest in Boston, including Theodore Parker's house, where he was deeply affected by the reverent care Mrs Parker bestowed on the rooms formerly occupied by her husband, and by the evident worship in which she held every memory of him. Mrs Parker gave him photographs of Theodore Parker and of the library; with these in his hand, he said, "I hurried away, almost too much moved to thank the widow for her gentle courtesy."

A large part of his first Sunday in Boston was passed with Charles Sumner in his rooms at the Coolidge House. They had a very interesting talk together on the politics of the hour and future possibilities, and also on matters connected with the Abolition struggle. Mr Bradlaugh felt a deep admiration for Sumner, and Sumner, in his turn, was most kind to my father and warm in his praises.

He was invited by Dr Loring, President of the Massachusetts Senate, to a dinner at the Massachusetts Club, given to Charles Sumner, to congratulate him on his supposed recovery to health—congratulations which proved, alas! all too premature. At this dinner he met Henry Wilson, Vice-President of the United States, and Joshua B. Smith—born a slave, then a Senator—besides other distinguished men. Every one was kind to him: Henry Wilson gave him a pressing invitation to Washington; Sumner bade him disregard the unfair attacks made upon him. When his health was proposed, and they all rose to their feet to give him three hearty cheers of greeting, he felt amply repaid for the pain he had suffered from those coarse attacks, bred by bigotry, which had alike preceded and pursued him from the Old World to the New. He dined with Sumner on other occasions, and receptions were given him in Boston, to which most of the leading men were invited. In fact, such honours and hospitalities were heaped upon him that, as one journal remarked, he seemed to have persuaded some people at least "that there are others besides Satan who are not so black as they are painted."

He naturally became a prey to the usual autograph-hunter. The "Theodore Parker Fraternity" determined to utilise the demand for his signature by procuring a supply for their "Fair," and Wendell Phillips undertook to beg them, which he did in the following letter:—

"23rd October '73.

"DEAR SIR,—The 'Theodore Parker Fraternity'—all the Church he allowed—hold a Fair, beginning October 27. At Mrs Parker's table she sells autographs—and wants some of yours. Now please write your name on the enclosed cards—a motto or sentiment also if you choose—and re-mail them to me, then I'll thank you, and earn their thanks also—and forgive you that you gave Mrs Sargent a photograph of yourself and forgot me!

"I hope you find crowds everywhere as cordial as those you gathered here—and where, as at Cambridge, if you don't happen on a crowd, I trust you may have one such hearer as you had there—Henry James, equal to about 1800 common folk—who was wholly carried away.—Yours, WENDELL PHILLIPS.

"Mr C. Bradlaugh."

Wendell Philips also presided at Mr Bradlaugh's second lecture in Boston, and again the audience was said to include some of the brightest intellects in New England. Amongst the visitors who came the next day to congratulate him on his success was William Lloyd Garrison, who, like Sumner, was one of my father's "great men." These Boston lectures produced an even greater sensation, and a revulsion of feeling in his favour more complete, than those delivered in New York.

After lecturing in the New England States, where I gather that many of the lectures originally contemplated had to be cut out in consequence of the distress occasioned by the financial panic, Mr Bradlaugh went west. He visited amongst other places Buffalo, Cincinnati (where the Roman Catholic Archbishop Purcell was amongst his auditors), St Louis, and Kansas, and at each place the newspapers waged fierce warfare after his departure. He reached Kansas in December, two days after the suspension of the chief bank in that city, and here he met with a somewhat serious accident. In passing along one of the inclines of the city, he slipped backwards on the frozen ground, and throwing out his right hand to save his back, he tore a piece out of the palm, and deeply gashed his wrist.* He was unable to get

* The *Kansas City Times* gave this amusing description of the accident:—"Kansas City is not a smooth city. Its greatest pride is its thousand hills, precipices, and bluffs. And the main characteristics of its inhabitants are their lofty airs, loud tone, and agility. This style is natural; it is acquired by hopping and skipping from the top of one side-walk, across a chasm or ravine, to the end of the "cut" or bluff, a limited distance, or across the

the wound properly dressed in Kansas, and as he had to be continually travelling and lecturing in the severe cold (about 6°), the injury was greatly aggravated, and it was many months before the wound was properly healed and without pain. While lecturing he suffered intensely, and when, as sometimes happened, some gesture or movement would set the wound bleeding afresh, it was, in addition, extremely inconvenient. The pain, at times exceedingly acute, rendered him abnormally irritable, and he afterwards told us one or two amusing stories of his trials and his temper at this time. At one place amongst his audience were a young lady, an elderly lady, whom he set down as the maiden aunt of the younger, and a young gentlemen, whom he assumed to be the young lady's lover. The young people kept up a continual flow of conversation, until, almost frantic with pain from his wound (which was also bleeding so freely that he was obliged to keep his hand raised all the evening), he stopped short in his lecture, and turning to the young people said, amidst profound silence, "If that young lady and young gentleman prefer their conversation to my lecture, I should be greatly obliged if they would continue it outside." The "aunt," he told us, looked daggers at the poor girl, and the culprits themselves did not dare to so much as exchange another glance during the rest of the evening; they looked so uncomfortable that he felt quite sorry for them, and repented of his irritability. At another place, where it was exceedingly cold, the man in charge of the stoves took the opportunity to thrust in huge logs with a great noise whenever he was unusually pathetic. He says that he bore with this as Job could not have borne with it

street to a ledge or plank, which offers a temporary relief from acrobatic exercise. Bradlaugh is unused to Kansas City side-walks, and never having practised tight-rope dancing, or walking upon an inclined plane of forty-five degrees, found himself somewhat surprised on Thursday morning. He had just left the Broadway, or Coates House, in company with General Lamborn, of the Kansas Pacific, and was about to cross Tenth Street, when he suddenly found himself falling; his feet slid down the inclined plane called a crossing, which was covered with ice, and he fell. Mr Bradlaugh is a large, heavy man, and had a great fear of falling upon the edge of the pavement. He threw out his right hand, and the full weight of his body came down upon his wrist. His hand unfortunately struck upon the edge of some sharp substance, probably the edge of the side-walk or curbing, the keen knife-like edge of which tore through the palm of his hand, inflicting a serious wound, reaching beyond the wrist, creating a painful but not dangerous hurt. . . . It is a mereiful providence that the life of this great and good man was saved."

had he been tempted to lecture there, but at last even his patience was exhausted, and he thundered out "words of affectionate remonstrance, which effectually prevented any more wood being used that evening."

Shortly after this he was at Chicago, and was amazed to see how the city had recovered from the recent fire; the spectacle of the magnificent buildings seemed like reopening a page from "Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp." Just before entering the lecture hall he saw a face he hardly recognised. "It was one I had not seen for a quarter of a century," he said. "'Don't you know me, Mr Bradlaugh?' was the greeting, and the voice seemed more familiar than the face. My memory went back to the days when food was short, and when I shared the scanty meal with the questioner, her mother, and her sister at Warner Place; but twenty-five years had sufficiently blotted the memory and blurred the page to confuse me in the recognition. Half-hesitatingly, I said, 'I am not quite sure; I think it is Hypatia.' I was wrong, however; it was her sister Theophila. And thus, after so long a time, I was again brought face to face with the daughters of one to whom the English freethought party in great measure owe the free press and free platforms we use to-day." He only stayed in Chicago one night, and had but a short interview with his old friends; yet even that brief glimpse of them brought him a throb of pain, "for," he said, "I could not help wondering whether, thirty years after my death, my own daughters might be in a strange land so entirely overlooked" as these ladies were.

From Chicago he went to Kalamazoo, and there the news of the death of his lecture-agent compelled his instant return to New York. He was very feverish and unwell at this time; his general health suffering from the effects of the wound in his hand, which had now become greatly swollen and inflamed, and caused him acute pain. The last days of the year found him once more in Boston, and they were made ever memorable to him by his first meeting with Ralph Waldo Emerson at a reception given by Mrs Sargent. As soon as he was able to use a pen—although writing was for some long time a matter of pain and difficulty—he himself described his meeting with Emerson, the hero of his boyhood's days.

"On Wednesday, December 31st," he wrote, "I had my first interview with Ralph Waldo Emerson, at a reception given to him

by Mrs Sargent at her residence in Chestnut Street. The rooms were filled by a company of probably the most chosen amongst New England's illustrious men and women, gathered to give greeting to 'the sage of Concord.' . . . My hostess gratified me soon after my arrival by searching me out amongst the crowd with the welcome words, 'Mr Emerson is specially inquiring for you.' I soon found myself face to face with a kind, truthful-looking man, reminding me somewhat in his countenance of the late Robert Owen. After a few words of introductory converse, I was assigned a chair, which had been specially preserved for me, next to Mr Emerson. The afternoon will always be memorable to me. Ralph Waldo Emerson commenced by quietly and unaffectedly reading in a clear, measured voice his new poem on 'The Tea-party Centennial.' His manner was so gentle that he seemed only reading it to one person, and yet his voice was so distinct that it filled the room with its lowest tones. When Mr Emerson ceased reading, a little to my surprise, and much to my delight, I was called upon to speak. Twenty-six years before, when too poor to buy the book, I had copied out parts of the famous lecture on 'Self-Reliance,' and now I stood in the presence of the great preacher, at least an example of a self-reliant man. After my tribute of respectful and earnestly thankful words to Emerson as one of the world's teachers, I could not refrain from using the spirit of his lines to ground a comparison between the public opinion of Boston in 1773 and 1873. Mr Emerson smiled an almost fatherly approbation of my very short speech; but, what the *Traveller* terms my 'kindly, courteous, but frank rebuke of the spirit of the age,' called forth quite a lively debate, which was opened by Wendell Phillips, who was followed by Henry Wilson, by the Rev. Mr Alger, and Dr Bartol, then by Mr Alcott, and last, but by no means least, by a notable woman, Julia Ward Howe. Mrs Howe strongly recalled to me the cold, intellectual face of Archbishop Manning, but she manifested feeling as well as intellect in her brief address. Wendell Philips spoke a second time, and to my immense delight, for it gave me a better opportunity of judging the greatest orator in New England. I fully expected that Mr Emerson, who had listened with marked attention and evident interest to the conflicting statements, would give some opinion; but as the oracle remained silent, I was obliged to be content with his pleasant personal words of promise

to seek me out for another meeting before my departure for England."

On the same night Mr Bradlaugh lectured to a brilliant and crowded audience in the Music Hall, and the next day the Vice-President of the United States came to congratulate him on his "continued successes," at the same time presenting him with the first volume of his invaluable work upon "The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America." At Salem, where my father lectured shortly afterwards, he was the guest of Dr Loring, President of the Massachusetts Senate. Then at the special request of the Rev. A. A. Miner, D.D.—who had heard him speak in Boston—he addressed the students and officers of Tuft's College, and found in them a rarely appreciative and enthusiastic audience. On the journey back to Boston Dr Miner told him that he liked his students to hear every man he thought a true man, whatever might be his views. "Some denounce me as a bigot," he added, "and others regard me as a heretic. I wish that when my young men leave me they may be carefully trained to hear all opinions and to form their own."

Everywhere my father found good friends, both amongst the poor and amongst the well-to-do; many old remembered faces, too, he met—poor men who had left the Old World to tempt, and sometimes to win, better fortune in the New. When he visited Niagara, the man who drove his buggy turned out to be a Northampton man and a devoted admirer.

But all the kindness and all the friendliness shown him in America did not weaken his fondness for his mother country and his determination to serve it. He loved his own land, and the men and women there who trusted him and worked with him. In the middle of January he wrote home: "My heart now yearns for Europe; and when I have covered another twenty thousand miles or so . . . I shall pack up the remnants of my shirts and come home." Little did he think as he wrote those words that within the brief space of a fortnight he would be on the sea, going back to England as fast as the *Java* could take him. But such was to be the final misfortune attending his first American lecturing tour. As he was journeying towards Washington to lecture, and to pay his promised visit to Henry Wilson in that city, a telegram from Austin Holyoake reached him, telling him that Gladstone had dissolved Parliament. He stopped

short in his journey, and turned back to New York in order to take the first vessel bound for home.

On his return to England he found that his lectures in the United States were represented as having been a dead failure; and that he himself had been mostly laughed at and ridiculed, statements exactly the reverse of truth. That his lectures brought him no money profit was the consequence, not of his unpopularity, but of the terrible financial panic that took place almost as soon as he arrived in the States. Then just as he was beginning to recoup the losses owing to this, he was summoned back by the dissolution of Parliament; and this final catastrophe brought him home with pockets almost as light as when he started; and worse than all, with a tremendous burden of liabilities incurred through broken engagements.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TWO NORTHAMPTON ELECTIONS, 1874.

In the spring of 1873 there was much talk of a dissolution of Parliament, and everywhere the constituencies were making ready for the general election—the first under the Ballot Act. In reviewing the candidatures Mr Bradlaugh said he hoped to see re-elected "Jacob Bright, as representing the women's question; Sir Charles Dilke for his outspoken Radicalism; George Dixon for his great services in the education movement; Henry Fawcett for his advanced Radicalism, and his knowledge of India; Charles Gilpin for his courage in striving to abolish capital punishment; C. Wren Hoskyns for his views on the land; Vernon Harcourt, despite his personal ambition, for his manly advocacy of popular rights; Edward Miall for his disestablishment advocacy; Anthony John Mundella and Duncan M'Laren for their useful support to their betters; Dr Playfair for his brains; Samuel Plimsoll for his shipping impeachment; Henry Richard for his services as a peace advocate; Peter Rylands for his endeavours to revive Joseph Hume's memory; Peter Alfred Taylor for his crusade against the game laws; and William M'Cullagh Torrens for knowledge of India and general utility." He did not agree with all these, but "they have work to do," he said, "and they try to do it." He added: "I shall be rather glad to see Samuel Morley again returned for Bristol. Personally, I do not know Mr Morley, but I believe him to be a good honest reformer as far as he goes, and after his own fashion." Amongst the new members he hoped to see sitting in the House were Mr Burt* (mentioned first of all), Mr Arch, Mr Odger, and Captain Maxse.

* How prepared Mr Burt's mind was for the staunch and unfailing support he subsequently gave Mr Bradlaugh during the long Parliamentary fight may be gathered from an answer given at this election. The cry of "heresy" had been raised against him at Blyth, and at a public meeting he was asked to answer—Yes or no, did he believe in the authenticity of the Bible? His answer was noteworthy, especially when looked upon in the light of later events. "As," he said, "I am not a candidate for a professor-

The possibilities of a dissolution, which did not after all come until February 1874, kept the candidates and committees busy all the year. Mr Bradlaugh was, of course, active at Northampton, although the Whigs, or Moderate Liberals as they were also called, asserted that "under no possible circumstances could Mr Bradlaugh be accepted as the candidate of the United Liberal party," and they declared he had no chance whatever of getting elected. Again Mr Bradlaugh offered to abide by a decision of the Liberal electors of the town or by a test ballot, but his offers were treated with disdain. In April he received a communication from the Tower Hamlets Radical Electoral Committee, asking him to allow a requisition to be promoted in his favour as a candidate for the borough at the next election, but he was not willing to desert Northampton. The prolonged electioneering, of course, meant an expensive contest, and to meet this an election fund was started, and subscriptions were sent in very readily.

Just as Mr Bradlaugh was leaving for his first visit to America, that is, in the early part of September, he issued his address to the electors of Northampton. In this address he declared himself in favour of various Parliamentary Reforms, such as:—

Short Parliaments, Redistribution of Seats, the Same Franchise Qualification for Borough and County;

Reform of the House of Lords, including Deprivation of Hereditary Legislative Privileges; Withdrawal of Legislative Privileges from existing Peers habitually absent from Parliament; the Creation of Life Peers, selected for ability in public service; the Veto of Lords to be a Suspensive Veto only, capable of being overruled in the same session by sufficient Veto of the Commons; Exclusion of the Bishops and the Archbishops;

Disestablishment of the Church;

Reform in National Expenditure and in Taxation; and

Changes in the Land Laws; Abolition of the Game Laws;

Alteration of the Law relating to Employer and Employed, and Extension of Conciliation Courts.

---

ship of theology or the occupancy of a pulpit, I decline to say whether I do or do not believe in the authenticity of the Bible. It is entirely foreign to the business before us. The contest in which we are engaged is a political, and not a religious one. I maintain that the constituency has no right whatever to institute an inquisition into the faith or creed of any candidate who may solicit its suffrages. For this reason I refuse to answer all and every question of a theological nature that may here or elsewhere be put to me.'

Not expecting the dissolution of Parliament to occur before March at earliest, Mr Bradlaugh left England with an easy mind as far as Northampton was concerned, knowing that in his absence his interests would be well guarded by his true and trusted friend Mr Austin Holyoake, Mr Charles Watts, and Mr G. W. Foote, and intending to return in ample time for the next election. When, on the 24th January, it was announced that Mr Gladstone had dissolved Parliament, and further, that the writs for the new Parliament were returnable, in the case of boroughs at least, on the 5th February, every one was taken by surprise. Mr Austin Holyoake, whose health, unhappily, had now become very fragile, telegraphed to Mr Bradlaugh with such promptitude that the message reached him on the afternoon of the same day that Mr Gladstone's declaration was published, while he was on his journey to Washington, where he was announced to lecture. He delayed not a moment, but, as I have said, turned back at once to New York and took the first steamer homeward bound.

In the meantime Mr C. Watts and Mr Foote held meetings in Northampton on behalf of his candidature every night; there was considerable enthusiasm, and the song "Bradlaugh for Northampton," written for the '68 election, was to be heard through the streets at all hours of the day. The local papers were, as usual, bitterly hostile. Mr Gilpin and Lord Henley, in spite of many indications to the contrary, came forward upon a joint programme, while the Conservative candidates were Messrs Phipps and Merewether.

The nomination took place on 31st January, my father being proposed by Mr (now become Councillor) Gurney, as before. Lord Henley's lawyer opposed the nomination on the ground of Mr Bradlaugh's absence. Mr Watts, as representing my father, pointed out that there were other cases of candidates absent from their constituencies, notably Mr Gladstone from Greenwich. In their anxiety the Radicals also sought legal aid, only to find, Mr Austin Holyoake said, that "every lawyer in the town had been retained by our opponents." After a little consideration, however, the Mayor and the Town-clerk opposed the objection of Lord Henley's agent, reminding him that if he persisted in an illegal objection he might render the whole election void. If the interval between the nomination and polling was short, the meetings held were many, and, considering the absence of the candidate, the fervour and enthusiasm at a wonderful pitch. Mr Watts and Mr Foote, as well as the Northampton committees, worked with un-

flagging ardour and zeal. Notwithstanding all this, the election was lost, and Mr Phipps, one of the Conservative candidates, a fellow-townsman and a brewer, was placed at the head of the poll. The voting was declared as follows:—

Phipps	2690
Gilpin	2310
Merewether	2175
Henley	1796
Bradlaugh	1653

An analysis of the voting showed that 1060 voters had such confidence in Mr Bradlaugh that they did not split their votes, but gave them to him solely. In 1868 he received 1086 votes; now, little more than five years later, with all the disadvantage of his absence—for, notwithstanding all the good and loyal work done, this disadvantage must nevertheless have been considerable—he polled 567 more, and Lord Henley, in spite of the fact that he was joint candidate with Mr Gilpin, only received 143 votes more than his rival.

Nothing had been heard from Mr Bradlaugh since the telegram despatched by him immediately on receiving news of the dissolution, to announce his return by the next boat. Just before the polling day a rumour was current that he had not left America at all, but had disregarded the claims of Northampton. This rumour was only dispelled by the receipt of a telegram two days after the declaration of the poll, telling of his arrival in Queenstown. He reached London on the morning of Sunday the 8th, and went to Northampton on the Tuesday following. The scene at the station defied description, and the crowd assembled to meet him extended right into the town. Along the route to the Market Square people were at the windows, and even upon the housetops, anxious to see and greet the defeated candidate. He addressed a few words to the mass of people gathered in the Square, and in the evening 5000 people crowded the Circus to suffocation, in an overwhelming desire to see and hear him, and when the time came to vote their confidence, not a single dissentient hand was held up.

As there was already some talk of Mr Gilpin's early retirement, in consequence of his failing health, and knowing that the divided representation of the borough was a cause of much vexation to Whigs and Radicals alike, since it meant the practical disenfranchisement of Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh made one last offer "for the sake of peace." He offered to submit the question

of his future candidature to Mr Gilpin, and if that gentleman, "in his heart and conscience," after hearing him, and an official representative of the other (Whig) side, should think it right to decide against him, he pledged himself to withdraw. This offer, like all the others of a similar kind, was refused. Before his death, however, Mr Gilpin expressed himself favourably towards Mr Bradlaugh's candidature,* and he had, as we know, subscribed £10 towards his expenses in the former election. The expenses of the present contest were quickly cleared by subscription, but my father's burden was greatly added to by the liabilities incurred by his sudden return from America. The broken engagement at Washington cost him 219 dollars. And after all his haste, not allowing one moment's avoidable delay in leaving, he had not the satisfaction of arriving in time for the poll, the borough elections having been carried through within twelve days, and the Atlantic passage taking some days longer then than it does now. It is small wonder if he felt somewhat despondent and disheartened, as he thought of the liabilities contracted on the other side of the Atlantic, and the lost election at home.

He arranged to leave again for the United States about the third week in September 1874. In many cases where damages had been claimed for his broken engagements of the spring, he had obtained indulgence by promising to fulfil them in the autumn, and lectures were arranged for him for dates extending from October to Christmas. All arrangements for his lecturing tour were complete, when the death of Mr Charles Gilpin in the first week of September put him in a terrible dilemma. His engagements in the States must be kept, Northampton must be fought.

Directly after Mr Gilpin's funeral Mr Bradlaugh issued his appeal for renewed support, and his address was extensively circulated, although indeed he might well have felt that the Northampton people must be getting tolerably familiar with the reforms he desired to advocate, if permitted to take his place as their representative in Parliament. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, and a most enthusiastic audience crowded every corner. For some days it was not known when the new writ would be issued, whether immediately—in which case my father might be

* In a statement made by Alderman P. P. Perry late in 1876 on the subject of Mr Bradlaugh's candidature, he said that the late Mr Charles Gilpin, immediately after his election in 1874, "earnestly recommended us to come to some arrangement with Mr Bradlaugh."

able to stay for the contest, or in a few weeks—when he ought to be on the other side of the Atlantic fulfilling those broken engagements, or after the reassembling of Parliament in the February of the following year, by which time he could arrange to return. As the days went on he became more and more perplexed as to what was the right course to pursue, but when, after a delay of a week or so, it was announced that the writ would be issued at once, he decided to stay to fight the battle himself, and again throw himself on the indulgence of his American friends, although this would necessarily involve a further pecuniary loss, great or moderate, according to the number of engagements broken. Mr C. G. Merewether once more contested the borough in the Conservative interest, and after much searching the Moderate Liberals finally selected Mr William Fowler as their candidate. This election was the most bitter my father had yet fought. In addition to the usual gross exaggerations concerning his political and religious opinions (which this time included the perennial "watch story"), the most cowardly statements were made concerning his private life by Mr Fowler and his adherents. Mr Bradlaugh sought to meet Mr Fowler face to face; he sought admission to his meetings but was refused, orders being given to use force if necessary; he went to the house where Mr Fowler was staying and sought a private interview, but the servant brought a message that Mr Fowler was "too busy to see Mr Bradlaugh." Five times at least Mr Bradlaugh tried to meet this man publicly and privately, but without avail; then, said Mr Bradlaugh, "I shall ask the electors of Northampton whether they will record their votes for a liar and a coward." At this there was a terrible outcry, and he was condemned as "foul-mouthed" for using such "hideous adjectives and substantives," such "vulgar virulence." The London and provincial press were equally severe on him. Mr Bradlaugh, in a speech to the electors during the contest, thus defended himself: "It had been said that his language had been strong. What else but strong language could be expected from a man who found himself slandered behind his back, and who found that not only was he himself libelled, but that foul language was cast upon those he was bound by every tie of honour and manhood to protect? To Mr Fowler he owed it that that afternoon a formal inquiry had been made to him whether he was married to his wife; to Mr Fowler he owed it that that afternoon he received a note asking if it were true that his mother were now living on

parish relief. They would not ask him to deny these things, even to deny them would degrade him; but he asked them what weapon a man could use against a foe who trampled on his dead mother's grave, and who struck at women, who at least ought to be safe from attack?" * Later on, in a letter from America, he wrote in reference to this: "In consequence of Mr Fowler's language as to my social morality, and my theories on marriage, I received anonymous letters inquiring if I had ever been married; my committee-men were actually formally asked if my daughters were illegitimate; and it was charged against me that my mother was now living in receipt of parish relief. Protected by Mr Fowler's words—which he dared not utter to my face—the oft-refuted 'watch story' was circulated with a dozen variations. And yet men wonder that I called the man 'liar and coward' who did this behind my back, and who refused me the opportunity of either public or private explanation." The nomination took place on the 2nd of October, and to Mr Joseph Gurney's name as proposer was added that of Mr Thomas Adams, one of the truest and most loyal of men, and an honour to the town of Northampton, of which he was several times Mayor. His devotion and friendship for Mr Bradlaugh was always the same—steady, constant, and reliable—and was broken only by his death. This, there is too much reason to believe, was hastened by overtaxing himself on my father's behalf whilst suffering from a severe attack of influenza.

The extraordinary bitterness of feeling in the town awakened by the personalities indulged in on the Whig side and Mr Bradlaugh's strongly expressed but quite natural resentment, had also its reaction of intense devotion to my father's personality, and there were most pathetic evidences of this. When the polling-day came one man ill in bed insisted upon being lifted out and carried to the polling-booth, declaring he would go to vote for Mr Bradlaugh even if he died on the way; another ardent supporter who had broken his leg in two places a week or two before, in spite of my father's expressed wish to the contrary, had himself conveyed to the polling-place in order that he might record his vote. Amongst the working women were many of his most enthusiastic adherents, and one poor woman, very ill indeed, dragged herself to the window on the polling day, and, watching for my father, opened it as he passed to give him greeting and a cheer. Enthusiasm there

* See Mrs Besant's account in *National Reformer*, October 11th, 1874.

was in plenty, but unhappily not voting power enough to carry him into Parliament, although indeed that was increasing rapidly, for when the poll was declared on the night of Tuesday the 6th, it stood thus:—

Merewether	2171
Fowler	1836
Bradlaugh	1766

In eight months therefore he had increased his vote by 113, and had crept up to within 70 of the Whig candidate.

At the declaration of their defeat the Northampton Radicals, for the first and only time, lost their self-control; the vile charges made against the man they had chosen to honour had worked them up to a state of the extremest indignation and anger, which, hitherto restrained, now in the first bitterness of their disappointment broke out in violence. An attack was made upon The Palmerston, Mr Fowler's headquarters; but Mr Bradlaugh was soon in the midst of the rioters, and using his utmost energy of rebuke and persuasion succeeded in dispersing the crowd. Unfortunately, he had to leave at nine o'clock to catch the Cunard steamship, the *Parthia*, at Queenstown. Relieved of the restraint of Mr Bradlaugh's presence, the rioting recommenced. The Palmerston was once more attacked, and the *Mercury* printing office, and the houses of some of Mr Fowler's supporters were besieged, in some cases the windows and doors being very much damaged. Mr Fowler's effigy was carried round the town by a woman, and was hooted and insulted until captured by the police. Fighting commenced, and as the excitement increased, the quieter and more timid inhabitants began to feel greatly alarmed; the soldiery was then called out, and the Riot Act read. At first this seemed only like pouring oil upon the flames, for these men, after their weeks of patience and forbearance, seemed for the time to have lost all restraint; but little by little the tumult subsided, and then the fighting was over for good, leaving for the next day a legacy of excitement or despondency according to temperament, and a legacy also of many bandaged heads, which happily betokened but few really serious injuries. The whole fury of the rioters was directed solely against William Fowler and his supporters, and it is noteworthy that, although the Conservative quarters were close by The Palmerston, they were unmolested. The press was, as usual, for the most part very unfair to Mr Bradlaugh—some even making him responsible for the rioting which occurred after

he left Northampton. There were, however, a few exceptions, and of these the *Times*, the *Examiner*, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, and the *Birmingham Daily Post* were the most notable.

Helping in the work of this election, we again find the name of George Odger. Two years before there had been some talk of asking him to become a candidate for Northampton, but he would on no consideration allow himself to be put forward in opposition to Mr Bradlaugh. Instead of coming to Northampton to stand against him, he came to try and win votes for him. Mr Watts and Mr Foote again unweariedly gave their services, and Mrs Annie Besant was in the town reporting the proceedings for the *Reformer* under the pen-name of Ajax.

Captain Maxse was amongst the subscribers to the expenses of this contest, and he wrote that he regarded Mr Bradlaugh's candidature as a national one. One would never guess, to see the long list of subscriptions (most in small sums, as always), that these same people had already supplied the funds for an election once before in that same year.

For upwards of five years the Liberals and Radicals of England had before them the melancholy sight of the Radical borough of Northampton represented in the Commons House of Parliament by two Conservatives. Even the Northampton Whigs began to feel that keeping Bradlaugh out was costing the borough too dear, especially as the people, sometimes in their very families, were divided into personally hostile camps. Hence, soon after this last election, the representatives of both parties met together and formally agreed to unite in contesting the Municipal and Parliamentary elections. As the Municipal elections were close at hand, the good results of this alliance were immediately visible. I am bound to say, however, that this amicable agreement between the Whigs and the Radicals was not very enduring, and long before the General Election of 1880 parties seemed almost as much divided as ever. The more far-seeing among the Whigs realised after the 1874 election that they must choose between being represented by the obnoxious Bradlaugh, or the equally (if otherwise) obnoxious Tories, but the more obstinate and more prejudiced still cried "No Bradlaugh," and it was not until the eleventh hour, when Mr Labouchere was brought in to run as a joint candidate with my father, that these yielded; and even then, as the analysis of the poll clearly showed, there were many who did not vote straight.

End of Vol. I.

DA
565
B7B65
1902
v.1

Bonner, Hypatia (Bradlaugh)
Charles Bradlaugh
[5th ed.]

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY